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NOVEMBER 2011
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SINCE 1982
ISSUE 244

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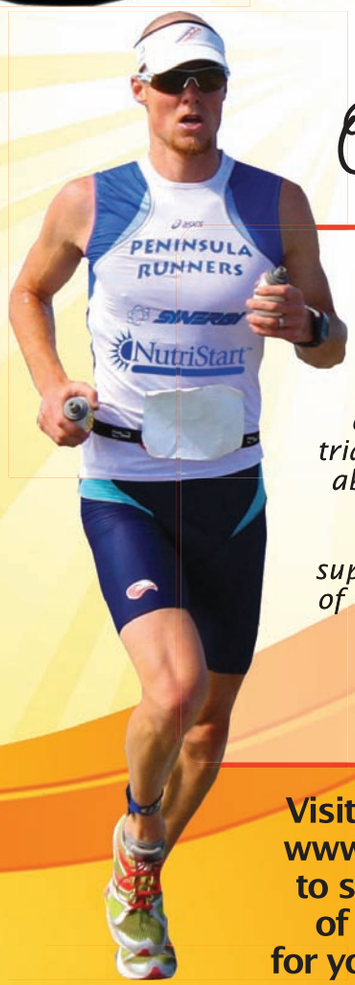

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Publisher & Senior Editor - Joseph Roberts
Managing Editor - Sonya Weir
Advertising Sales -Adam Sealey,
Hartley Berg, Phil Watson, David Gennrich
Assistant to the Publisher - Trisha Noble
Design & Production - www.perubluesky.ca
Proofing - Anthony Prosk

Contributors:
Robert Alstead, Steve Anderson, Alan Cassels, Brigette DePape, Carolyn Herriot, Mac McLaughlin, Vesanto Melina, Geoff Olson, Gwen Randall-Young, Joseph Roberts, Don Miguel Ruiz, Adam Sealey, Lucy Sharratt, David Suzuki, Eckhart Tolle, Sonya Weir, Chris Zaporoski

Sales - Head office 604-733-2215
toll-free 1-800-365-8897

Contact Common Ground:
Phone: **604-733-2215**
Fax: 604-733-4415
Advertising: adam@commonground.ca
philwatson.cg@gmail.com
hartley@commonground.ca
david@commonground.ca
Editorial: editor@commonground.ca

Common Ground Publishing Corp.
204-4381 Fraser St.
Vancouver, BC V5V 4G4 Canada

100% owned and operated by Canadians.
Published 12 times a year in Canada.

Publications Mail Agreement No. 40011171
Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to
Circulation Dept. 204-4381 Fraser St.
Vancouver, BC V5V 4G4
ISSN No. 0824-0698

Copies printed: 72,000
Over 250,000 readers per issue
Survey shows 3 to 4 readers/copy.

Annual subscription is $60 (US$50) for one year (12 issues). Single issues are $6 (specify issue #). Payable by cheque, Visa, MasterCard, Interac or money order.

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Donald Sutherland at Occupy Vancouver
Photo by Jazmin Miranda
Cover design by Kris Kozak

Jazmin Miranda attended the Oct. 15th Occupy Vancouver rally to lend support and to capture images of a growing social movement. Donald Sutherland was there and graciously agreed to being photographed by Jazmin Miranda. Sutherland is in Vancouver working on a movie adaptation of The Hunger Games. Jazmin Miranda is a community health worker with an interest in social issues. Her photographs can be viewed at www.jazminmiranda.1x.com

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Thinking beyond the ballot box

Taking non-violent direct action poses risks, but the risks that we face for not taking action are too great.

On June 3, in an unprecedented protest, Brigette DePape, a Parliamentary Page, silently held up a sign during the throne speech of the Government of Canada in the Senate that read "Stop Harper!" She was quickly removed. This article represents a shortened version of the talk she gave at the Thinking Beyond the Ballot Box *event for social justice at the Rio Theatre in Vancouver on October 22.*

There were so many immediate factors that led me to take the action in the Senate a few months ago and I'd love to share a few of them with you.

The first is about my roommate Tasha Peters. Some people have posters of celebrities on their wall, but Tasha has strategies for building the movement. On flip chart paper, she wrote, "How can we confront the Harper majority?" This got me thinking seriously about what we can do.

One of my favourite professors brought us to a stop logging rally at Beaver Pond in solidarity with people chaining themselves to trees. It reminded me of our power as people. Eve Engler's book about the car industry has a giant stop sign on the cover. I had been reading it before bed and this gave me the idea for the stop sign in the Senate.

It's these different acts, while seemingly unrelated, that build on each other to create impactful moments. Together, they will eventually stop Harper and the unjust systems of which he is just one cog.

Harper's agenda must not be underestimated. He has used the economic crisis as a justification to implement austerity measures. He says he has to cut the services to deal with the deficit because we need the money. But we have the money! It's just that he is spending billions of dollars on fighter jets, on expanding prisons and the tar sands, on prolonging wars, rather than on us – on education, health care, childcare and what we really need.

So what are we going to do about this? Some people say that there's nothing we can do; we voted him into power, didn't we? The majority of Canadians, 60 percent of us, did not vote for Harper. In addition, democracy goes far beyond the ballot box. Voting once every four years won't cut it. Our government does not represent us so we need to come together to hold it to account, like social movements in Bolivia who through sustained protest a few days ago were able to overturn their government's decision to build a highway where indigenous peoples live.

It's been so inspiring to see people around the world make fundamental changes in their societies by *acting* outside the ballot box. Young people are at the forefront of these movements for change, for example with the Arab Spring, in Chile, and in Greece.

Change is a mood and it's contagious. Look at how people power has spread from the global South to the Global North with Occupy Wall Street and how occupations are spreading across Canada. When I took action in the Senate, I had no idea I would soon be catapulted into this incredible moment full of possibility for change. Are we on the verge of our Canadian Spring? Of our world Spring?

Taking non-violent direct action poses risks, but the risks that we face for not taking action are too great not to join with others in the streets now. Harper and the unfettered free market approach is eroding what is left of our social, environmental and economic fabric, and with climate change lurking, we don't have much time to turn things around. Taking to the streets has never been more urgent so let's embrace this collective awakening and take that leap together. I can't wait to build this movement with you.

Vander Zalm talks about Smart Meters

I'm hopeful; I'm hoping that, in fact, the people will rise up against the smart meters because the issue is so much like the HST. It's the government imposing – imposing something on the people that hasn't been sufficiently looked into and that the people are upset about and they are spending a billion dollars without any consultation. And people are concerned about health effects; they are concerned about the cost of it; they are concerned about the invasion of privacy; they are concerned that people elsewhere are protesting elsewhere and finding out that it's not for them. So they need to be challenged on this. I can't believe the media is ignoring this issue. I was at a function last night with 160 people. We talked about smart meters. Everybody there, there were no exceptions, everybody was opposed, everybody was concerned. So when that many people are concerned, how can the government and the media sit back and totally ignore it? I can't believe it.

I'm afraid that BC Hydro is going to go broke on this issue.

They tell us the cost is a billion dollars. Whenever the government tells us something is going to cost a billion dollars, it's generally a billion and a half, however, it's a big cost. And that will have to be paid for by the consumer. I'm afraid that BC Hydro is going to go broke on this issue. And they're spending so much in so many places at the direction of government, that eventually maybe that's the whole idea, I'm not sure, that they privatize BC hydro too. And this will go a long way towards that. It will probably destroy Hydro in the end.

Well, the privacy issue is a great concern to a lot of people and I'm certainly concerned about that too because there's a device put to the side of your house that basically knows what's happening in the house, what you're doing, when you leave, when you come, when you go on vacation, and eventually, of course, every appliance you buy will have a device that connects to the smart meter and they'll know all the more still. They'll even know what you're cooking. It's sad, it's crazy.

The big picture, of course, is that we're moving towards globalization. Eventually, we'll be governed out of Brussels, Belgium or some place like that. And this all ties into that. They can monitor what's happening in the world. It's big brother, we'll be totally controlled, that's the direction we're moving in – and we've got to stop it and now's the time to stop it, not after it's happened.

Editor's Note: You can watch the video www.citizensforsafetechnology.org/Former-BC-Premier-Bill-Vander-Zalm-Talks-About-Smart-Meters and on Common Ground's new website. Transcribed from the video.

Chris Zaporoski

FEATURE

Social awakening

Occupy social consciousness

Common Ground publisher speaks at Occupy Vancouver October 15, 2011. Photo by Patrik Parkes.

On a warm Friday night several weeks ago, I was sitting on a bench at English Bay, watching the stars shoot through the late summer sky. Many people were out that night – mature people strolling after dinner, romantic couples on the benches and, as usual, youth hanging out on the beach. I could hear distant conversations and people's laughter. It was a nice relaxing end to another workweek. I checked the time – it was just past 10:30 PM.

Suddenly, flashing lights lit up the whole scene in front of me. Surprised, I turned my head to see a police car pulling quietly onto the main pathway leading to the beach. The car continued until it reached the seawall and then stopped. A group of elegantly dressed older men and women strolled by, obviously enjoying their seawall walk after dinner while the police car sat in the middle of the pathway with its emergency lights flashing. It was a bizarre, almost surreal scene. The quiet was broken by a voice coming from the car's loudspeaker: "This is the Vancouver Police. This beach is now closed."

I was stunned. There was nothing going on that could possibly explain that police car and the given order. There were no rowdy, drunken teenagers, no public disturbance and no noise. "What is that all about?" I asked my girlfriend who was equally as shocked. Thoughts were flashing through my head, but one kept repeating itself and I voiced it. "This sounds like a curfew."

A curfew on Vancouver's beaches?

The last time I experienced a curfew was some 30-years-ago during the martial law in Poland. The communist regime declared martial law to crack down on the nation-wide social revolt led by the Solidarity movement. Back then, I felt it was my duty and moral obligation to take a stand against the totalitarian regime in defence of what I believed to be fundamental human rights: the right to freedom, justice, truth and basic dignity. Because of my beliefs, I spent nearly a year in jail and stood trial by a military court. After the amnesty, as an "unwanted element," I was allowed to leave the country with a one-way passport. This is how I arrived in Canada in search of freedom.

And here I was now in the heart of Vancouver's peaceful West End, experiencing a curfew. But the most bizarre thing is that hardly anyone questions it, as if it were "normal." Normal? Adult people are told to go home because of someone's insane order not to allow the public on their own (public) beaches. If the police mandate is "to serve and protect," my question is who are they serving and protecting?

As adults, we tend to lose the capacity to ask questions and challenge the status quo. When insanity becomes the norm, hardly anyone sees it as insanity. To most of us, it becomes "normal." So here we are in the middle of Vancouver experiencing glimpses of what it would feel like to live in a totalitarian state.

The concept of totalitarianism was invented by Italian fascists. Some readers might object to the word "fascism" applied to the reality of socio-political life in today's North America, but, as Franklin D. Roosevelt stated, "The first truth is that the liberty of a democracy is not safe if the people tolerate the growth of private power to a point where it becomes stronger than the democratic state itself. That, in its essence, is fascism – ownership of government by an individual, by a group, or by any other controlling private power." Doesn't it sound exactly like the world we live in?

Upon my arrival in North America, my first culture shock was linguistic. It wasn't the language itself, but the idiom used to describe the worth of a person, such as "Bob is worth two million." It was shocking to me that someone's worth could be measured in dollars rather than in qualities like kindness, goodness, wisdom, talent, intelligence or their service to others. Hence, a millionaire is worth a million dollars, while a homeless person, for instance, is worth… I guess, nothing. Think about the social implications of that way of thinking. Someone might dismiss it as a purely linguistic phenomenon, but it is not just a "figure of speech." The words and phrases we use reflect our definitions and our beliefs, which create our understanding of the world and determine our behaviour.

Human behaviour is governed by motivation. If we measure our worth by the status of our bank account and by how many possessions we have, those who are rich are "worthy" while the poor are simply "worthless." If the only measure of one's worth is the amount of accumulated money, in order to obtain that goal, anything goes. In a system where profit is the paramount motivation, one cannot help but see the world around them as a potential source of profit. People, animals, resources, our entire planet, are reduced to nothing more than a means to an end to be exploited for profit. Isn't that what is happening?

The Earth is being raped, resources plundered and animals are exploited or exterminated. The majority of humanity lives in poverty and we who are lucky enough to live in a developed country are reduced to mere consumers, required only to perpetually feed the hungry ghost of profit.

My second culture shock came some 15-years-ago when I decided to end my corporate career. The reason was simple: I just couldn't imagine sacrificing my dreams any longer in exchange for a steady pay cheque and the illusion of security. I was surprised at how many of my co-workers approached me, saying, "I wish I could do the same." "Why don't you?" I asked. But each of them had an excuse: debt, a mortgage, car payments, a benefits package or some other form of perceived benefit.

Shocked by how many people wished they could do the same, I was hit by the realization that they were slaves. Completely unaware, they were participating in the most subtle form of slavery – an economic slavery. And they always had a valid reason for accepting it as "normal." After all, those jobs seemed to be guaranteed for a lifetime and based on that assumption, people planned their future. Fortunately, the reality check came a mere few years later. The company was sold and resold through a series of bizarre financial schemes involving billions of dollars and, eventually, the new corporate owner decided to outsource the work of the entire department to Asia. All of my former co-workers, including those who had spent decades creating profits for the company, were "not needed anymore" and lost their jobs.

This story is repeated throughout Canada, North America and the world. This is the world we live in. This is the world we have all created. Not "them" but all of us. It is not the creation of some conspiracy group; we all participate in this collective insanity. But the more insanity we encounter, the more wake up calls we experience. Some of them come from our own country. In 2003, the brilliant Canadian documentary *The Corporation* exposed the nature of corporations as destructive, psychopathic, socio-economic phenomena. The most recent CBC Doc Zone production dealing with the subject of the economic meltdown is entitled simply *Meltdown* and it takes it even further. More powerful and insightful than the Oscar-wining, highly acclaimed *Inside Job*, *Meltdown* exposes the global scale of the insanity. And of course, there is Michael Moore with his exposés.

As a human race, we are just beginning to wake up. Occupy Wall Street started the Occupy Movement, which is now spreading globally, offering glimpses of sanity and hope for the future. Some call it a "revolution," but for those, I have a word of warning. Revolution means revolving, or turning around the wheel of power. It is the same old wheel of power, with someone on top and someone on the bottom. This is why every revolution throughout human history eventually led to the same outcome – the oppression of one by another. Ideologies change, but the mechanism of the power struggle remains intact; the once powerless become powerful and vice versa.

There are also angry voices demanding "justice" as if putting a few bankers in jail could solve the root cause of the problem. Common criminals, no matter what the colours of their collars, ought to be held accountable for their crimes, yet for those who advocate the idea of vengeance, remember the words of Gandhi, the greatest leader of non-violent civil disobedience in the history of mankind: "An eye for an eye makes the whole world blind." And indeed we are blind if we don't see the insanity of repeating the same old patterns of unconscious behaviour. Noam Chomsky once said, "It's a fair assumption that every human being, real human beings, flesh and blood ones, not corporations, but every flesh and blood human being is a moral person. You know, we've got the same genes, we're more or less the same, but our nature, the nature of humans, allows all kinds of behaviour. I mean, every one of us under some circumstances could be a gas chamber attendant or a saint."

It is easy to be angry, point fingers and seek vengeance. It is much harder to see the reality of the problem. Those "circumstances" Chomsky talks about are nothing more than our collective agreement on what is acceptable and what is not. Such a collective agreement allowed for the creation of monstrosities such as the Third Reich and the Holocaust. The same collective agreement allows for the existence of the current system. No matter how corrupt and abused our democracy is, it is still democracy. We live in a democratic society. It's not "us" versus "them," but we are all responsible because we allowed the corruption and abuse to exist. Our individual and collective compliance allows for the insanity to perpetuate itself. Our silence and obedience are the true measures of our passive participation. They show the level of our unconsciousness.

Occupy Wall Street (NYC) demonstrator. Photo by David Shankbone.

How unconscious we can become is best portrayed by Robert Maresca and his wife Diane of West Islip, New York, who just applied to the US Patent and Trademark office to trademark the "Occupy Wall Street" slogan. Their intent is to sell sweatshirts, T-shirts, bumper stickers, among other merchandise. According to CNN, Maresca said, "I'm no marketing genius, but when you got something that's across 50 states, it's a brand now." He even offered to sell the trademark to Occupy Wall Street members, if they wanted it, for just one dollar, after they paid his expenses. The problem is that neither the Marescas nor their lawyer sees anything wrong with that. While people at Wall Street stand up for justice, freedom and human dignity, others are trying to make a buck on it. This is how corrupt in unconsciousness our own minds can become.

On October 25, in a violent crackdown of Occupy Oakland by riot police, Scott Olsen, a young ex-marine, was the most seriously injured. The man survived two tours in Iraq and returned home safely only to be shot in the head with a police projectile in his own country, by his own police. The incident that followed shortly afterward is even more appalling. As Scott lay bleeding and motionless on the ground, video footage clearly shows that, while other protesters rushed in to help Scott, a policeman from behind a barrier deliberately threw a flash or tear gas grenade into the crowd near the injured man. This is beyond comprehension – an act of psychopathic insanity that calls for a public outcry. It is no wonder none of the mainstream US news agencies covered the story, but it made headlines around the world.

At the same time, Scott's fellow US Marine posted a photo of himself on the *Washington Post's* blog site, holding a picture of the bleeding man with a sign bearing the symbol for the US Marines and the words: "You did this to my brother."

I believe it is the insanity of the government itself and its "law" enforcement agencies that invite revolution, through committing acts of violence against peaceful demonstrators who exercise their fundamental rights, promised and guaranteed by the Constitution.

Let's all pray for Scott Olsen's safe recovery and send him our love. And kudos to Keith Olbermann and his *Countdown* on Current TV. Olbermann is the only American high-profile journalist who, from the very beginning, covered the Occupy Movement. See his daily program at http://www.youtube.com/user/Current

The alternative to revolution is evolution. It is growth through transformation, exactly what humanity needs – to leave behind the old dysfunctional patterns and structures and evolve to the new level of consciousness. And that's what the Occupy Movement represents to me. It is our chance to change the way we do things, an experiment in real democracy. Michael Moore frequently visited and addressed Occupy Wall Street. When asked what advice he had for the people down there, he said, "I don't have any advice. I'd rather listen."

This is real democracy at work. No more political parties, lobby groups and leaders manipulating masses and swaying opinions one way or another, but the system allowing for every voice to be heard. No more pushing one's agenda on others, but an open discussion and consensus. It is the way of the future.

In the first weeks of Occupy Wall Street, Deepak Chopra was allowed to address the General Assembly. Instead of making political speeches, he invited everyone to do a short meditation. I now invite you, dear reader, to participate in the meditation he led: "Put your hand on your heart and just ask yourself internally, 'What kind of world do I want to live in?' And listen. Do it now. And now ask yourself, 'How can I make that happen. How can I make that happen from the place of love, compassion, joy and equanimity?' Simple anger will only perpetuate what already is out there. It was created by greed and fear. We have to go beyond that and come from the place of compassion, centred equanimity and creativity. Once again, ask yourself, 'How can I be the change I want to see in the world?'"

Join the awakening

"Just Say No" to prescription drugs

Follow doctor's orders. Make sure you fill your prescriptions. Don't stop taking your drugs without consulting your doctor. Those sentiments form the heart of medical advice and we're all expected to follow orders, right? After all, it's your health that's at stake.

Yet at the same time, the concept of obedience – just following orders – seems a bitter pill to swallow these days. There is a strong breeze of resistance in the air, whether it's against bankers playing with our savings, corporations misleading us about their concern for the environment or governments forgetting the "other 99 percent" of the population. Should the urge to resist authority be expressed in how you receive medical care?

Sometimes, it is entirely rational to 'Just Say No.' When your doctor gives you a good grasp of the facts of the disease she thinks you have and what its natural course might look like and you learn about the drug she's prescribing and its potential benefits and harms – from the common annoying side effects to the rare but potentially life threatening adverse effects – saying "No" is definitely within your power.

After all, you're the one swallowing the pill. Actually, given the sheer volume and growth in prescriptions being written for the general population, refusing to take a drug seems a natural reaction.

To my surprise, a substantial number of physicians agree patients are getting too much medicine. A survey last year of US doctors found 42 percent believed patients in their own practice were receiving too much care and only six percent were getting too little. About three quarters of the doctors surveyed said the main thing causing them to practise more aggressively was concern over malpractice. Doctors are somewhat fearful if something goes wrong, the patient could sue, but that's more an American phenomenon than a Canadian one.

What else is at play? About half the doctors surveyed said "clinical performance measures" were a strong reason for possibly overtreating their patients. In other words, doctors may order anti-cholesterol drugs or drugs for heartburn because the guidelines say they should. I could go into a rant why guidelines are so frequently bad, but suffice to say many guidelines are funded and composed by consultants acting on behalf of the pharmaceutical companies. *If* it looks like doctors are overprescribing, it's because they've let the moneylenders into the temple.

Where's the patient in all this who might reasonably ask, "Are you offering me a prescription because you are worried about getting sued or worried someone will accuse you of not following guidelines? Can you think of any lamer rationale for asking me to swallow a pill everyday?"

I wouldn't counsel people to commit civil disobedience when it comes to their doctor's advice because it could have a tumultuous effect on their relationship with someone who is genuinely interested in keeping them healthy. At the same time, with the rising level of people's awareness about healthcare, particularly around the problems with prescription drugs, many people sense even their own trusted physician is too quick to prescribe. And they don't know what to do about it.

So let me suggest an experiment in medical civil disobedience. Next time the prescription pad comes flying out, try saying "No" to that new drug.

There is some precedent for this. Remember 25-years-ago when then First Lady Nancy Reagan held a White House rally declaring society needed to "Just Say No to Drugs?" Of course, she was talking about illicit drugs that were seen as the utter scourge of American youth. As an aside, you don't have to be a genius to conclude just telling a teenager to say no to something will make them want it even more, but let's run with Nancy's sentiment, if not her slogan, for a moment. Let's dust it off

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and apply it to an older population.

It's clear the overprescription of medications, especially to older people – our parents and grandparents – is fuelling lives of quiet desperation. If we want to start saying "No" to the rampant prescribing of drugs in the elderly, maybe we can start reducing the medical imprisonment they're living in due to the staggering amounts of medication they are fed daily.

We need to come clean about the charade we all seem to be playing when it comes to pharmaceuticals. Even if we believe patients are "involved and engaged" partners in their healthcare, are the principles of fully "informed" consent actually at work? Does a new drug always arrive with full information about a person's diagnoses and the natural history of the disease, the drug being offered, its potential for benefit and harm and so on? Does all that happen in a typical 15-minute interaction with your doctor? Hmm, maybe not. So just saying "No" could be a game changer.

This is radical because a lot of modern medicine depends not on 'partnerships' but on obedience. Hang around hospitals long enough and you'll hear how a patient's behaviour is described in such demeaning terms as "compliance" or "adherence." The message is clear: follow your doctor's orders, or else. Only the very brave would really want to fully resist.

But, in fact, saying "No" might help build on a more sensible "less is more" approach to medicine. It's a subtle acknowledgement of what no one wants to come out and say: that much of what is offered in healthcare is unneeded, irrelevant or potentially harmful. This sentiment was captured in an article last year in the *Archives of Internal Medicine* (May 10, 2010). Physicians Deborah Grady and Rita Redberg wrote: "There are many areas of medicine where not testing, not imaging and not treating actually result in better health outcomes."

One of the areas they highlight, in terms of overtreatment, is a class of drugs called proton pump inhibitors (PPI) – drugs like Nexium, Losec, Pantoloc and Pariet

When many things are working against your interests, disobedience can be healthy. When it comes to swallowing medical treatments, being "compliant" can sometimes be bad for your health.

– which are widely prescribed to people with simple heartburn. No doubt these are effective drugs, but they are so widely and persistently used, many people are probably being unnecessarily hurt by them.

Recent research paints a troubling picture of PPIs showing they can increase your risk of developing a *C. difficile* infection (*Clostridium difficile*) or pneumonia and also increase your risk of fractures and cause recurrent diarrhoea. If you are getting weapons-grade medicine, such as a PPI for a simple case of heartburn, you are likely increasing your chances of being harmed. Maybe you shouldn't have started on them or maybe it's time for a drug holiday? Time to test-drive that "No"?

Many of us are not the type to go on marches and protests and we express our solidarity with the "Occupiers of Wall Street" from our couches, but that doesn't mean we can't participate in this social awakening in other ways. When many things are working against your interests, disobedience can be healthy. When it comes to swallowing medical treatments, being "compliant" can sometimes be bad for your health.

You won't be alone in saying "No to Drugs." A recent US study revealed one startling fact: many people don't take their medications as ordered. In fact, about one in five patients fail to pick up their new prescriptions from the pharmacy. There are many ways to resist and maybe the first way is to have a frank discussion with your doctor. Ask her if you really need that new prescription or the ones you're currently taking.

You might be surprised to find out she's a resister too and doesn't really want to prescribe it for you anyway.

Alan Cassels is a drug policy researcher at the University of Victoria. Read more of what he's writing about at www.alancassels.com

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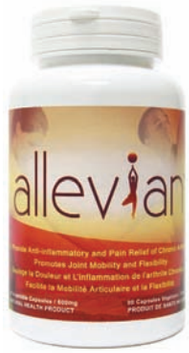

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Adam Sealey

It's time to "Occupy" Health Canada

Health Canada is conducting an unnecessary war on natural health products (NHPs). It states 40 percent of Canadians have expressed "concern or mistrust" for NHPs, but here's the clincher. Its list of natural health products includes Red Bull, Sudafed, Nicorette gum and Cover Girl makeup. How can these products be called natural health products? And is it any wonder the public is concerned about the situation, as evidenced by outcry to limit the sale and potency of highly cafinated synthetic energy drinks, for example? This is how Health Canada is using "problem-reaction-solution" to justify denying the approval of legitimate NHPs for sale in Canada. It has created the problem by allowing these products, which are anything but totally safe or natural, to taint the public perception of natural health products that are safe and natural.

Common Ground sales representatives at CHFA Expo East in October.

As a person who depends on safe and effective NHPs for relief of chronic aches and pains from sports injuries and to boost my immunity and health, I am deeply concerned about the direction Health Canada is taking with its apparent systematic dismantling of the Canadian Natural Health industry.

As noted in the report entitled *Why the Natural Health Product Regulations Should be Suspended and Revised*, prepared for Canadian Members of Parliament by Citizens for Choice in Health Care, "Health Canada denies that the industry is being downsized. But as of their quarterly report, ending June 30, 2011, fully 45 percent (23,818) of the product licence applications submitted since 2004 have been unsuccessful. In 2004, Canadians had over 70,000 different NHPs to choose from. As of June 30, 2011… only 29, 011 different products had been licensed. The agency repeatedly states their foremost consideration for the regulations is consumer safety. However, the products being eliminated for failing to prove safety have often been sold for decades… without problems. Health Canada cannot justify the rigours, or the outcomes of the current reulations based on safety concerns."

Last month, as a representative of *Common Ground* magazine, I attended the Canadian Health Food Association (CHFA) Expo East in Toronto. The theme of our October issue was "Protect Natural Health Products: Join the Team Win Back our Health Freedom." I, along with two other *Common Ground* representatives, promoted our October issue to various delegates and I attended regulatory affairs meetings regarding the state of the Natural Health Product Regulations and their ongoing corrosive effect on the industry.

I spoke to Mr. Lawless, a Health Canada representative, about Health Canada's Natural Health Products Directorate (NHPD). I asked him how his agency justifies removing known, safe natural products from the market without any scientific proof they are a danger to human health. He replied that Health Canada takes a "risk based approach" to approving drugs (and NHPs since 2004). In other words, does the benefit outweigh the risk when taking a particular drug or NHP? Looking back, I see this "risk based approach" failed to save people from the fatal side effects of Vioxx, a drug unleashed on a public that looks to Health Canada to protect them from toxic or dangerous drugs.

Health Canada insists on denying you access to proven natural health products; ironic, since many tax-paying Healthy Canadians swear by them. Enough's enough. It's time to call, write, and e-mail your local MP. Ask who they're working for, and let them know that Nature's Right.

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Since 2004, when natural health products were moved out of the Foods category and began to be regulated as a subset of Drugs, they have been presumed to be dangerous until proven safe. Health Canada betrayed the intentions of the Canadian public, the Standing Committee on Health that advised Parliament with 53 recommendations, and, ultimately, Parliament. It was a betrayal because the number one recommendation accepted by Parliament, was: "there shall be legislative reform" [i.e. changes made to the Food and Drugs Act]… to provide a category for NHPs that was distinct from either Foods or Drugs, and which recognized their low risk nature." But that never happened. Instead, Health Canada took advantage of loopholes in the wording of the report and created a separate directorate and a new set of regulations for NHPs, which treated them as a subset of Drugs. How is bromelain extract from pineapple a drug? How is Echinacea or Golden Rod extract a drug?

The central problem with Health Canada is the agency enforces the same legislation that it creates while being in relationship with some of the wealthiest pharmaceutical corporations on the planet. This is a huge conflict of interest.

Since similar NHPD type regulations came into enforcement in the European Union, in the majority of countries, people can't even get vitamin C without a doctor's prescription; if they can, they can't purchase more than 100mg potency. And many herbs used traditionally in Chinese and Ayurvedic medicine are systematically being removed from use unless they are prescribed by mostly western trained doctors.

The central problem with Health Canada is the agency enforces the same legislation that it creates while being in relationship with some of the wealthiest pharmaceutical corporations on the planet.

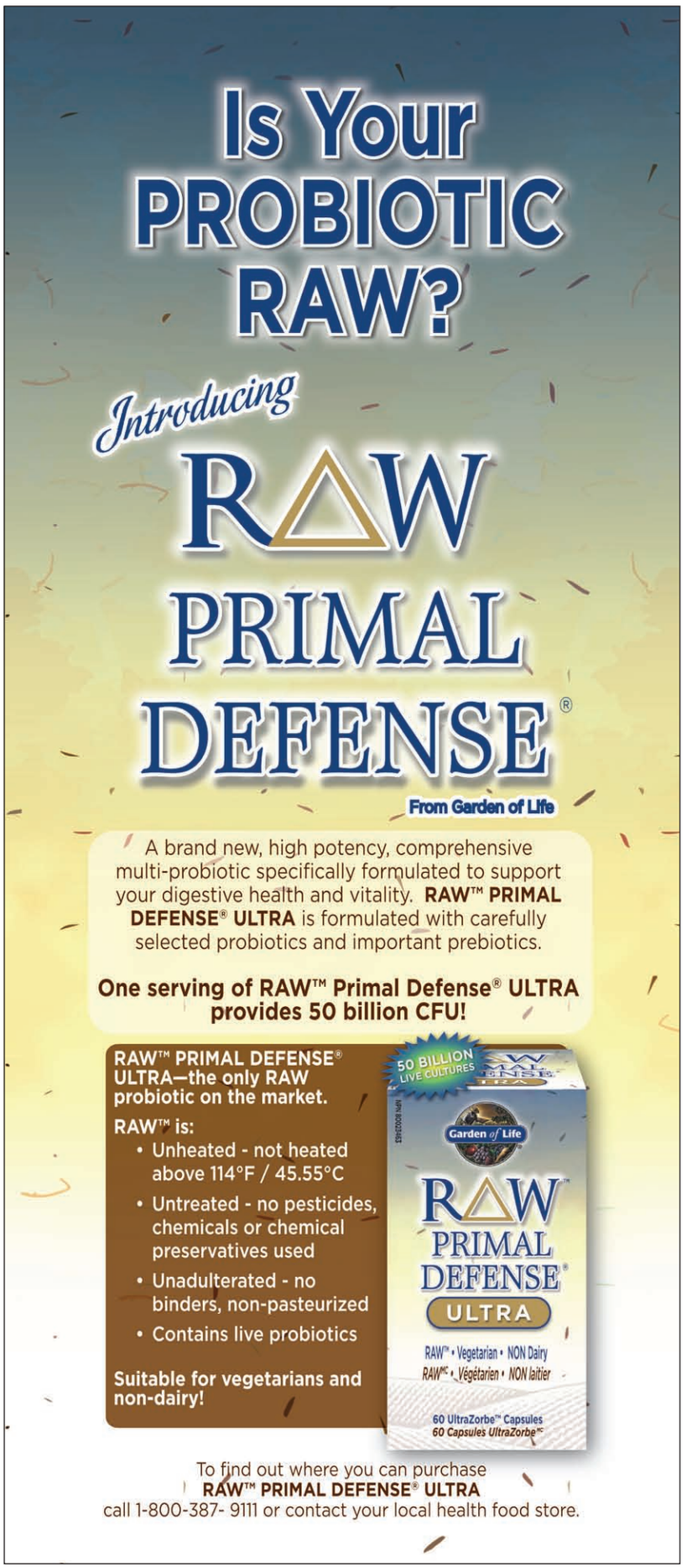
"Unless we take decisive action now and support organizations like Natural Health Freedom Canada, naturalhealthfreedomcanada.com and the The Natural Health Products Protection Association (nhppa.org), what has happened in Europe will be our reality before we know it. Canada will be next unless we "Occupy Health Canada" and our elected representatives and demand freedom to choose natural health products without government interference. We do not consent to their "protection"!"

We, as Canadians, have a responsibility to the rest of the world to preserve our freedom of choice as it relates to health. If Health Canada is allowed to continue with its war on safe and effective natural health products, freedom in the US and Mexico will be next to disappear owing to our deep integration of economic, environmental, health and many other regulations and laws under agreements like the Security & Prosperity Partnership (spin-speak for North American Union) recently signed by our countries.

All over Canada, people are finally taking to the streets with the Occupy movement and other actions and demanding a return to a society where our Charter rights to "Life, Liberty and Security" are once again respected by our governments. Fortunately, we have courageous and passionate people working to uphold our health freedoms and to halt Health Canada's unreasonable regulations – people like Shawn Buckley of the Natural Health Products Protection Association (NHPPA), Marilyn Nelson of Natural Health Freedom Canada and John Biggs of Citizens for Choice in Natural Health Care.

Big Pharma pays a lot of money to lobbyists who convince elected representatives – yes, the ones you vote for – to pass laws that make it easy for Health Canada to rush new blockbuster drugs to market. Meanwhile, since 2004 when our government moved the regulation of NHPs under a subset of drugs, Health Canada continues to deny the approval of safe and effective NHPs, in many cases when there is absolutely no evidence they are unsafe or ineffective. By contrast, pharmaceuticals are definitely unsafe – they are now the number one killer in the US ahead of even auto accidents.

NHPs are being put through the NHPD wringer, which demands that manufacturers "prove" their effectiveness when millions of people know they are effective and safe. But Health Canada marches on with its mission to "protect the health and safety of Canadians." And protect them from what? From digestive enzymes from pineapple? Yes, Health Canada is going after many digestive enzymes as well as things like *continued p.16…*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Food sovereignty

Around the world, tens of thousands of people are taking to the streets asking for a better reason to get out of bed in the morning. People are finding their voice because so many things need to change. It's hard to know where to start, but for me it starts with hunger. When I know that money-hungry traders, having a field day on investment markets, are causing millions to starve, I have to speak up.

"The boom in new speculative opportunities in global grain, edible oil and livestock markets has created a vicious cycle," Frederick Kaufman wrote in his article, *The Food Bubble*: *How Wall Street Starved Millions and Got Away With It*, published in *Harper's* magazine in July. "The more the price of food commodities increases, the more money pours into the sector and the higher prices rise," Kaufman noted.

As the World Bank indicated, an increase of only 10 percent in world food prices results in another 10 million people slipping below the poverty line. And according to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations' (FAO) Food Price Index, overall food costs have risen 39 percent within one year. In Canada, the use of food banks rose 28 percent to the highest ever level recorded; food banks now support 867,948 people in a typical month. Despite the fact Canada's rural communities are located in prime agricultural areas, half the food banks participating in HungerCount 2010 are located in rural communities (http://foodbankscanada.ca/documents/HungerCount)

La Via Campesina (http://viacampesina.org/en/), a coalition of more than 148 organizations advocating family farm-based sustainable agriculture, has formed in response to the growing control of multinational corporations over agricultural policies, facilitated by the economic policies of multilateral organizations such as the WTO, World Bank and the IMF. *La Via Campesina's* principles of food sovereignty include the following:

- Food is a basic human right. Everyone must have access to safe, nutritious and culturally appropriate food in sufficient quantity and quality to sustain a healthy life with full human dignity.
- Food Sovereignty entails the sustainable care and use of natural resources, especially land, water, seeds and livestock breeds. The people who work the land must have the right to conserve biodiversity free of restrictive intellectual property rights.
- Food is first and foremost a source of nutrition and only secondarily an item of trade. National agricultural policies must prioritize production for domestic consumption and food self-sufficiency. Food imports must not displace local production nor depress prices.
- Regulation and taxation of speculative capital and a strictly enforced code of conduct for transnational corporations is needed.
- The ongoing displacement, forced urbanization, oppression and increasing incidence of racism of smallholder farmers cannot be tolerated.

Over the course of two years, 3,500 Canadians participated in a groundbreaking grassroots project to define paths towards a food system that provides accessible food for all. Resetting the Table: A People's Food Policy for Canada is based on 10 detailed policy discussion papers, which include both government policy recommendations and concrete guidelines for action. (http://peoplesfoodpolicy.ca)

The project advocates for a National Food Policy that connects food, health, agriculture, the environment and social justice. People getting actively involved in decision making creates positive solutions that will benefit the 99 percent of the people now asking for the chance to have a better future.

Carolyn Herriot is author of **A Year on the Garden Path: A 52-Week Organic Gardening Guide** and **The Zero-Mile Diet: A Year-round Guide to Growing Organic Food** (Harbour Publishing). http://earthfuture.com/gardenpath

Bone, muscle & kidney health

In the September issue of *Common Ground*, I reviewed research related to acid-base balance and diet. (See http://www.commonground.ca/iss/242/cg242_Vesanto.shtml) To summarize, meats, dairy products and grains are acid forming, which means that after these foods are digested and metabolized, they influence body fluids to be acidic. This is due to the particular mix of amino acids and minerals such as sulphur and phosphate.

In contrast, vegetables and fruits influence toward the slightly alkaline state our body should be in, due to the somewhat different mix of amino acids, along with potassium, magnesium and other minerals. (The sour, acidic taste of many fruits is due to compounds that are broken down during digestion and which don't play a role here.)

Our lungs and kidneys play key roles in keeping our arterial blood within the narrow pH range (7.35-7.45) required for life and good health. This is done mainly through exhaled CO2 and by variable amounts of certain compounds excreted in our urine. If we consume excessive amounts of acid-forming foods, the body must tap its alkaline reserves in order to maintain the proper pH. North American diets are so heavily weighted in the acid-forming direction that there is an impact on our kidneys and subsequently on our muscles and bones. Consequences of our acid-forming diets can include kidney damage, kidney stones, muscle wasting and possibly the dissolution of bone.

Consequences of our acid-forming diets can include kidney damage, kidney stones, muscle wasting and possibly the dissolution of bone.

Kidneys: After any food is eaten, digested and absorbed, compounds that are acidic or alkaline end up in our kidneys. The kidney can excrete or retain various substances in the urine to bring our pH back within the ideal range and, in the process, draw on calcium (an alkali) from bones and the amino acid glutamine from muscle to help neutralize an acid load. Calcium salts are lost in the urine and in some cases when the urine is acidic and concentrated, these settle out in the form of kidney stones.

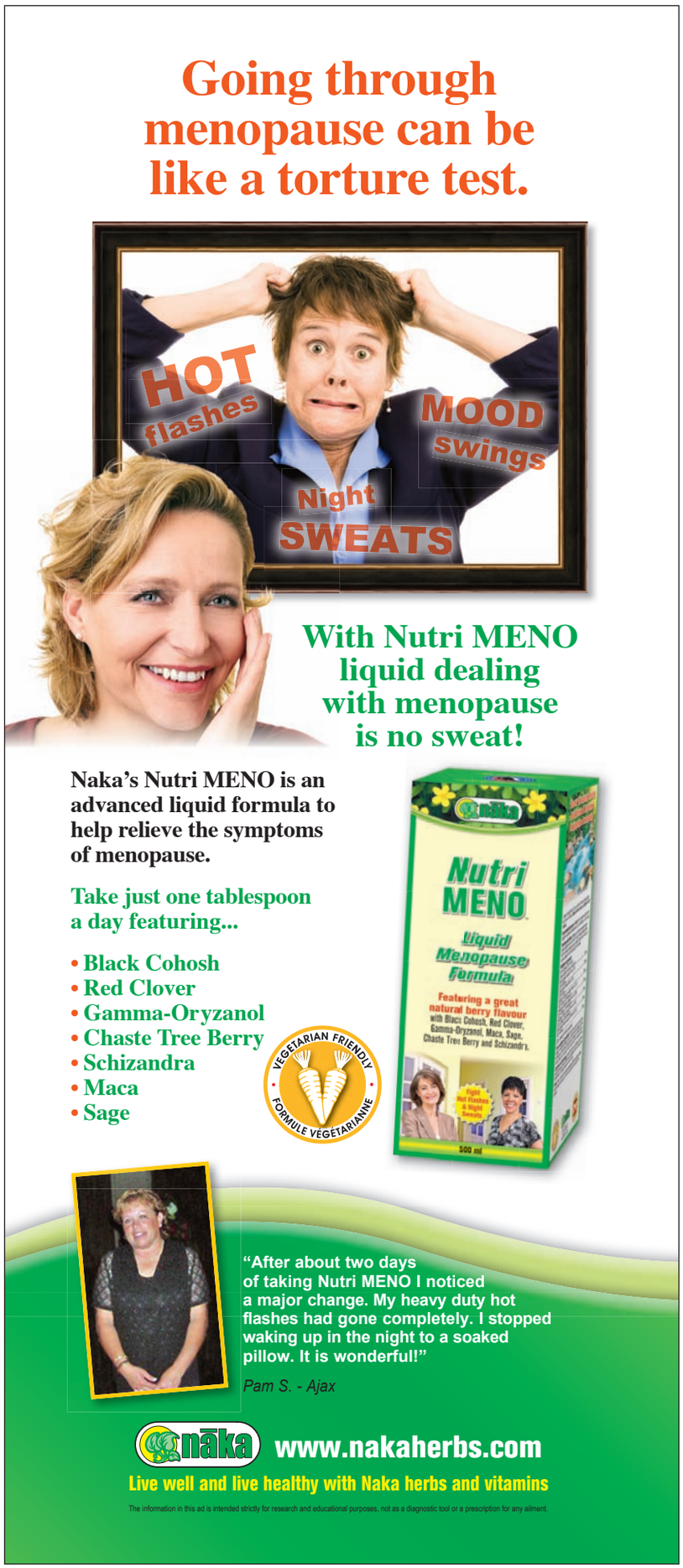
Bones: A high intake of protein – from meat, cheese, other animal proteins – and grains increases urinary calcium. One key to preventing so much calcium from flowing out is to consume a less acidic diet. We definitely need an adequate protein intake to maintain our bones so very low protein diets are not the answer. The alkaline effects of a diet centred on vegetables, fruits and legumes appear to protect against hip fractures. Many bone- building vitamins and minerals in these plant foods help too.

Muscles: Glutamine is an amino acid in muscle protein that can help neutralize an acidic environment. The body can counteract acidosis by breaking down muscle, thereby liberating glutamine plus other amino acids that can be converted to glutamine. Amino acids are then excreted, causing an overall loss of muscle protein. A shift in diet towards fruits and veggies may minimize or slow these losses.

Aging: As we age, mild acidosis can worsen, possibly due to a decline in kidney function or to dietary changes. This may explain some muscle and bone loss that can occur.

November 8: Free Talk & Book signing with chef **Joseph Forest**, Banyen Books, 3608 W. 4th Ave., Vancouver, 6:30-8pm. Joseph Forest and Vesanto Melina co-authored the very new book **Cooking Vegetarian** (Wiley Canada).

November 23: Vesanto speaks about "Veg. Nutrition for Superb Health," 7pm, Walnut Grove Library, 8889 Walnut Grove Dr., Langley. Visit www.nutrispeak.com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...*Occupy* *from pg. 13*

probiotics and oil of oregano. It's interesting to note the first product in Canada to receive a Natural Product Number (NPN) was Red Bull, an energy drink loaded with caffeine.

In early October, our Ministry of Health responded to public pressure about the dangers of incredibly high caffeine energy drinks that have been responsible for injuries and, in some cases, death. "One of the best things about Canada is that we have choices. But to make informed choices, we as parents and Canadians need to have useful information… we are giving Canadians the tools and the information they need to make their own choices, for themselves, and for their families," said Chris Alexander, Member of Parliament for Ajax-Pickering.

It's very comforting to know our elected representatives feel we should be able to make our own decisions when it comes to what we put in our bodies. It would be nice if this sentiment were true and applied to natural health products as well.

Health Canada promised to ensure that, within 18 months, all energy drinks would contain a maximum of 180mg of caffeine as well as regulate them as "foods" rather than "natural health products." Foods? Natural health products? How could synthetic energy drinks be considered either? Part of the reason is the word "natural" is not defined legally. It can be used freely in labeling in Canada and does not legally imply a product is either safe or natural as you and I assume those words to mean.

A Canadian producer of a very popular and time-tested, multi-ingredient joint nourishing formula has recently been told by the NHPD it must take its product off the market and reformulate it because it contains pineapple enzyme that may be unsafe – even though it has been on the market for more than 10 years. Along with other products made by this innovative Canadian company, the removal of their best sellers from the market, reformulation and lost sales expenses will likely put them out of business, harming the family that depends on that business, throwing their employees out of work, weakening the economy while harming consumers who depend on their safe and effective natural health products. How does this square with Health Canada's mandate "protecting the health & safety of Canadians"?

We are only free to make our own decisions if we take back our power by calling, writing, faxing or visiting our elected member of Parliament to demand the Natural Health Product Regulations be suspended, pending review by the Standing Committee on Health and revision by an appropriate body, but obviously not one in bed with Big Pharma's interests. Demand that NHPs be given their own unique third category as outlined in the "Charter of Health Freedom" at www.nhppa.org where they are presumed safe until proven unsafe.

Please join and financially support health freedom organizations like Natural Health Freedom Canada, www.naturalhealthfreedomcanada.com 1-905-509-5885, the National Health Federation, thenhf.com, and the Natural Health Products Protection Assn, nhppa.org, 250-377-4930.

Adam Sealey is a health freedom activist who has been involved in campaigns to ensure continued increased access to natural health products and the survival of the natural health products industry.

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Mighty Magnesium - Are You Getting Enough?

The reason why I have entitled this article Mighty Magnesium is because I believe after years of research and reading about this amazing mineral that magnesium is the most important nutrient that your body needs. According to Dr. Carolyn Dean MD, ND, author of *The Magnesium Miracle* and Dr. Mildred Seelig M.D., author of *The Magnesium Factor*, magnesium activates 325 enzymatic processes in the body.

My journey into understanding its importance started many years ago when I worked as a Director of Nursing. The doctors would prescribe magnesium intravenously when patients came into hospital with heart attack, stroke, high blood pressure, seizures, migraines and toxemia. Studies indicate that if the magnesium was given within 3 hours of the onset of the stroke or heart attack that it would help to reduce the incidence of death by 50%. However I really didn't understand how important magnesium was until it changed my sister's life in 2004. Debbie had suffered with severe migraines,averaging 3-4 a week since the age of 12. When she was 46 she discovered a powdered magnesium supplement that became ionic in hot water and started taking it twice a day every day and it reduced her migraines down to one every 5 weeks. I started researching the benefits of magnesium at that time and began taking the powdered magnesium for insomnia, fibromyalgia and bone density issues and the product helped all three health issues very quickly.

Dr. Dean states that while it is difficult to diagnose a magnesium deficiency with a blood serum test (because only 1% of magnesium is found in the blood), you can determine if you have a magnesium deficiency by looking at symptoms of deficiency. There are over a hundred magnesium deficiency symptoms or co-factors that can lead to deficiency. These are listed in the first chapter of her book.

Many people today talk about the importance of getting enough calcium through diet and supplementation. According to Carolyn Dean, 80% of the population in North America are magnesium deficient and have a very unhealthy (10:1) balance of calcium to magnesium. So how does this unhealthy balance occur? Many North Americans eat a diet that contains large amounts of dairy and animal protein. Dairy contains a ratio of 10 calcium to 1 magnesium, animal meat contains 5 calcium to 1 magnesium and many of our processed foods are fortified with calcium.

Magnesium is found naturally in leafy greens and unrefined nuts, grains and seeds but it is almost impossible to get enough of this important mineral in our foods because our soils are so deficient of minerals. Caffeine, alcohol, sugar, processed foods, stress, perspiration and too much calcium will contribute to magnesium depletion.

Calcium and magnesium both play a very important role to help keep us healthy but an imbalance can lead to many health problems. Let's look at the roles that these two minerals have in the body:

Calcium tenses and excites muscles and nerves while magnesium relaxes them. Calcium constipates the bowels and thickens blood while magnesium is a gentle natural laxative and it helps to keep our blood thin. Calcium builds up in the body while magnesium is depleted every twelve hours.

When you look at the list of magnesium deficiency symptoms in the table of contents in Dr. Carolyn Dean's book you can understand why the depletion of this significant mineral can wreak such havoc on our overall health.

Some of the health issues she states are caused by magnesium deficiency include anxiety, depression, insomnia, high blood pressure and cholesterol, diabetes, heart disease-including heart palpitations and heart attacks. Magnesium plays such an important role in balancing blood sugar levels and preventing insulin resistance. Dr. Dean has two chapters dedicated to pregnancy, safe labour and delivery, women's issues such as PMS, dysmenorrhea, menopause, infertility and miscarriage. Her list also includes osteoporosis (magnesium is responsible for activating two hormones involved in preserving bone structure and suppressing bone breakdown), and a chapter on fibromyalgia and chronic fatigue syndrome. Magnesium is also important for energy production.

Magnesium activates Vitamin D to help our bodies absorb and assimilate calcium. When our bodies are not getting enough magnesium it can lead to health issues such as hardening and narrowing of the arteries, gall stones, kidney stones and calcium deposits in the joints and muscles (one of the contributing factors to arthritis and fibromyalgia).

This amazing mineral also activates melatonin, our sleep hormone, serotonin, our 'happy hormone', our B Vitamins which help to reduce stress and balance the output of our adrenal hormones and activates Omega 3's which are necessary for brain function and inflammation.

As the owner of Natural Calm Canada and a woman in her fifties I have come to understand how important it is to get the right balance of a healthy lifestyle with lots of exercise, nutritious food and the right type of supplementation. Our Natural Calm products provide an effective and absorbable source of magnesium and calcium through our ionic powder that dissolves in hot water and through our transdermal magnesium chloride oil –which is sourced from sea water.

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Addiction to unhappiness

In intimate relationships, pain-bodies are often clever enough to lie low until you start living together and preferably have signed a contract committing yourself to be with this person for the rest of your life. You don't just marry your wife or husband, you also marry her or his pain-body and your spouse marries yours. It can be quite a shock when, perhaps not long after moving in together or after the honeymoon, you find suddenly one day there is a complete personality change in your partner. Her voice becomes harsh or shrill as she accuses you, blames you or shouts at you, most likely over a relatively trivial matter. Or she becomes totally withdrawn. "What's wrong?" you ask. "Nothing is wrong," she says. But the intensely hostile energy she emanates is saying, "Everything is wrong."

When you look into her eyes, there is no light in them anymore; it is as if a heavy veil has descended and the being you know and love, which before was able to shine through her ego, is now totally obscured. A complete stranger seems to be looking back at you and in her eyes there is hatred, hostility, bitterness or anger. When she speaks to you, it is not your spouse or partner who is speaking but the pain-body speaking through them. Whatever she is saying is the pain-body's version of reality; a reality completely distorted by fear, hostility, anger and a desire to inflict and receive more pain.

At this point, you may wonder whether this is your partner's real face that you had never seen before and whether you made a dreadful mistake in choosing this person. It is, of course, not the real face, just the pain-body that temporarily has taken possession. It would be hard to find a partner who does not carry a pain-body, but it would perhaps be wise to choose someone whose pain-body is not excessively dense.

Some people carry dense pain-bodies that are never completely dormant. They may be smiling and making polite conversation, but you do not need to be psychic to sense that seething ball of unhappy emotion in them just underneath the surface, waiting for the next event to react to, the next person to blame or confront, the next thing to be unhappy about. Their pain-bodies can never get enough, are always hungry. They magnify the ego's need for enemies.

Through their reactivity, relatively insignificant matters are blown up out of all proportion as they try to pull other people into their drama by getting them to react. Some get involved in protracted and ultimately pointless battles or court cases with organizations or individuals. Others are consumed by obsessive hatred toward an ex-spouse or partner. Unaware of the pain they carry inside, by their reaction, they project the pain into events and situations. Due to a complete lack of self-awareness, they cannot tell the difference between an event and their reaction to the event. To them, the unhappiness and even the pain itself is out there in the event or situation. Being unconscious of their inner state, they don't even know that they are deeply unhappy, that they are suffering.

Sometimes, people with such dense pain-bodies become activists fighting for a cause. The cause may indeed be worthy and they are sometimes successful at first in getting things done; however, the negative energy that flows into what they say and do and their unconscious need for enemies and conflict tend to generate increasing opposition to their cause. Usually, they also end up creating enemies within their own organization because wherever they go, they find reasons for feeling bad and so their pain-body continues to find exactly what it is looking for.

Entertainment, the media and the pain-body

If you were not familiar with our contemporary civilization, if you had come here from another age or another planet, one of the things that would amaze you is that millions of people love and pay money to watch humans kill and inflict pain on each other and call it "entertainment." Why do violent films attract such large

audiences? There is an entire industry, a large part of which fuels the human addiction to unhappiness. People obviously watch those films because they want to feel bad. What is it in humans that loves to feel bad and calls it good? The pain-body, of course. A large part of the entertainment industry caters to it. So in addition to reactivity, negative thinking and personal drama, the pain-body also renews itself vicariously through the cinema and television screen. Pain-bodies write and produce these films and pain-bodies pay to watch them.

Is it always "wrong" to show and watch violence on television and the cinema screen? Does all such violence cater to the pain-body? At the current evolutionary stage of humanity, violence is still not only all pervasive, but even on the increase, as the old egoic consciousness, amplified by the collective pain-body, intensifies prior to its inevitable demise. If films show violence in its wider context, if they show its origin and its consequences, show what it does to the victim as well as the perpetrator, show the collective unconsciousness that lies behind it and is passed on from generation to generation (the anger and hatred that lives in humans as the pain-body), then those films can fulfill a vital function in the awakening of humanity. They can act as a mirror in which humanity sees its own insanity. That in you which recognizes madness as madness (even if it is your own) is sanity, is the arising awareness, is the end of insanity.

Due to a complete lack of self-awareness, they cannot tell the difference between an event and their reaction to the event.

Such films do exist and they do not fuel the pain-body. Some of the best anti-war films are films that show the reality of war rather than a glamorized version of it. The pain-body can only feed on films in which violence is portrayed as normal or even desirable human behaviour or that glorify violence with the sole purpose of generating negative emotion in the viewer and so become a "fix" for the pain-addicted pain-body. The popular tabloid press does not primarily sell news but negative emotion – food for the pain-body. "Outrage" screams the three-inch headline, or "Bastards." The British tabloid press excels at this. They know that negative emotion sells far more papers than news does. There is a tendency in the news media in general, including television, to thrive on negative news. The worse things get, the more excited the presenters become and often the negative excitement is generated by the media itself. Pain-bodies just love it.

The collective female pain-body

The collective dimension of the pain-body has different strands in it. Tribes, nations, races all have their own collective pain-body, some heavier than others, and most members of that tribe, nation or race have a share in it to a greater or lesser degree.

Almost every woman has her share in the collective female pain-body, which tends to become activated particularly just prior to the time of menstruation. At that time, many women become overwhelmed by intense negative emotion.

The suppression of the feminine principle, especially over the past two thousand years, has enabled the ego to gain absolute supremacy in the collective human psyche. Although women have egos, of course, the ego can take root and grow more easily in the male form than in the female. This is because women are less mind identified than men. They are more in touch with the inner body and the intelligence of the organism where the intuitive faculties originate. The female form is less rigidly encapsulated than the male, has greater openness and sensitivity toward other life-forms and is more attuned to the natural world.

If the balance between male and female energies had not been destroyed on our planet, the ego's growth would have been greatly curtailed. We would not have declared war on nature and we would not be so completely alienated from our Being.

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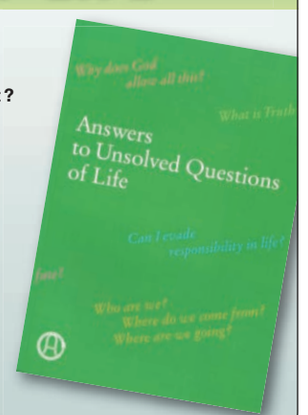

Demonstrators don V for Vendetta masks in *Occupy Everywhere*

It's an image you may have seen around lately. You might recognize the pale, goateed face with the ear-to-ear grin from the 2006 film *V for Vendetta*. To disguise both his identity and disfigurement, the central character wears a mask representing Guy Fawkes, a 17th century Englishman who plotted to blow up the Houses of Parliament.

From the cobbled streets of Madrid to the mirrored canyons of Manhattan, this grinning face is now a fixture in street protests. Demonstrators around the world are donning plastic masks inspired by the film. A report in the *New York Times* quotes Howard Beige, vice president of the New York-based Rubie's Costume Co., who claims his company produces the item and sells more than 100,000 a year, 20 times more than its other masks.

A shadowy group of Internet activists, Anonymous, were first to employ the image of the V mask in their online communiqués. This widespread network of hacktivists captured media attention with their launch of an Iranian Green Party site, in response to Iran's disputed 2009 election. Other Anonymous schemes included "Operation Payback," a series of cyber attacks against Visa and MasterCard in 2010, for withdrawal of banking services to WikiLeaks. This past August, they targeted San Francisco's Bay Area Rapid Transit after the organization attempted to block cell phone communications during a public protest against the shooting of a homeless man by a BART police officer.

Anonymous' first major target, the Church of Scientology, was sparked by a video by church member Tom Cruise. In 2008, V-masked demonstrators appeared in street protests in London against the religious organization. Were the masked demonstrators members of the loosely affiliated hacking collective or just fellow travellers dogpiling on a very litigious cult? That's the thing about masks – no one knows for sure. What we can say with some confidence is now everyone, from slacktivists to soccer moms, are wearing V masks in street protests.

So why V? How has this image attained so much visual currency, both online and off?

The V image dates back to a 1982-1985 comic book series by writer Alan Moore and artist David Lloyd. This dystopic tale, set in a future fascist Britain, begins with a young working class girl walking the streets of London after curfew. Desperate for money, Evey approaches a group of men in an attempt to prostitute herself. The men, who belong to the feared security police, threaten to rape and kill her. V arrives just in time to finish off the men and save Evey. He then whisks her to a nearby rooftop to witness his timed bombing of the Old Bailey, the London courthouse.

An Occupy Vancouver demonstrator sports a V for Vendetta mask.

V's mask, black cape and wide-brimmed hat are a period-piece nod to Britain's first homegrown terrorist, Guy Fawkes. According to historians, Fawkes and a group of Catholic co-conspirators engineered their "Gunpowder Plot" to spark a revolution in England in 1605. V intends to stage a similar attack on Parliament, in an effort to spark revolution among the fearful masses.

Early in their film career, the Wachowski Brothers penned a screen adaptation of Moore's comic book series. During postproduction of the second and last films of their *Matrix* trilogy, they returned to this project, soliciting James McTeigue for directorial duties. The all-star cast of the completed production included Natalie Portman as Evey and Hugo Weaving (Agent Smith in the *Matrix*) as the masked character, V.

The comic book V is an anarchist archangel of vengeance, with no reluctance to kill. The Hollywood V remains an anarchist, but he tries to avoid collateral damage as he seeks out his targets. It is left to the viewer to decide if V is a hero or a villain, sane or insane. "You're a monster," Evey says to him after discovering his campaign to kill those who took part in his internment and medical experimentation. "What they did to me was monstrous," he replies from behind his mask.

In both versions, V lives underground in an abandoned, but lavishly decorated, subway cavern, complete with works of art stolen from the 'Department of Censorship.' He speaks in poetic monologues and sociological soundbites, going from mad to verse as he prepares breakfast or practises his swordsmanship against an empty suit of armour. "A revolution without dancing is a revolution not worth having," he tells Evey, paraphrasing anarchist Emma Goldman. "People should not be afraid of their governments. Governments should be afraid of their people," he adds, adapting a line from John Basil Barnhill.

In the film version, the US has collapsed into chaos, a victim of its own accidentally unleashed bioweapons. As fear spreads across an economically ravaged world, the British people respond by electing into power a fascist political party, Norsefire. The regime then sets out to 'disappear' enemies of the state, including the activist parents of the child Evey. Writer Alan Moore cleverly employed the Hobbesian metaphor of the state as a gigantic body. The police force is "The Nose," the secret police "The Finger," the visual surveillance branch is "The Eye" and the audio surveillance branch is "The Ear." The media, in charge of broadcasting propaganda, is "The Mouth."

Partway through the film (spoiler alert!), we learn 80,000 British lives were lost years ago in a virus outbreak. The virus was developed through medical experiments on social deviants and political dissidents at a detention centre that also held V. The head of "The Finger," Creedy, turns out to have been responsible for the lethal outbreak and the resulting panic atmosphere that swept Norsefire to power. Completing this conspiratorial circle, a cure for the bio-attack virus has

been developed by a pharmaceutical company with ties to Norsefire.

The film raises troubling issues about truth, justice and that Machiavellian puzzler: does the end ever justify the means? What is terrorism and who are the real terrorists? Just as the protestors' V masks have leapt from colourful pages of an eighties comic book, today's headlines seem to have been ripped out of Moore's paranoiac, mid-eighties vision of widespread electronic surveillance, black sites where terrorism suspects are rendered and tortured without legal recourse, media-mediated mass fear, rampant corporate unaccountability and a global elite floating through life in a bubble of privilege.

In the film, V mails out thousands of Guy Fawkes masks across London in preparation for his final act of resistance/terrorism; the destruction of the empty Houses of Parliament on the evening of November 5, the anniversary of Guy Fawkes' Gunpowder Plot. Tens of thousands of Londoners, emboldened by the chaos V has unleashed, don the masks and march toward the Parliament.

In the final scene, the people successfully face down the police without violence and witness Parliament's destruction. They take off their masks, revealing the faces behind them. The idea and the people – thesis and antithesis – come together in a synthesis.

The 'Occupy Everywhere' movement... fits seamlessly with the 99 percent alluded to in the final scenes of V for Vendetta where the "restless many" peacefully confront the truncheon-wielding protectors of the "prosperous few."

V himself remains a mystery in the film. His identity and survival don't matter, he insists. It's the idea he embodies, of free individuals living in mutual aid, which cannot die. "Beneath this mask, there is more than flesh," V tells his nemesis in the film. "Beneath this mask, there is an idea, Mr. Creedy, and ideas are bulletproof."

Evey offers a tender rebuttal to this seductive intellectualism. "I've witnessed firsthand the power of ideas. I've seen people kill in the name of them; and die defending them. But you cannot kiss an idea, cannot touch it or hold it. Ideas do not bleed; it cannot feel pain and it does not love. And it is not an idea that I miss, it is a man," she says of V in a monologue at the close of the film.

By 2008, the V for Vendetta-inspired Guy Fawkes mask had become the default face of Anonymous. The organization's monkey wrenching efforts extended to the 2011 Arab Spring, and their old-school overloading of Egyptian government fax machines in response to Mubarek's crackdown on the Internet. "Egyptians referenced *V for Vendetta* more frequently than any other work of art," observes Cairo activist Wael Khairy. "On the internet, Photoshop was used to alter Pharaoh Tutankhamen's face into a Fawkes' smile."

There are dozens of videos on YouTube of computer-generated V's, slowly intoning demands of Anonymous in a synthesized voice. The most recent videos are directed against the big banks, in support of Occupy Wall Street. What remains of Anonymous after an alleged series of arrests is probably like the Guy Fawkes mask – it is a placeholder, not for one identity, but for a persistent idea of V-like justice held by an unknown number of sympathizers across the world.

By late 2011, themes out of hacktivism began to merge with the above ground elements of the activist culture, such as the Vancouver-published *Adbusters*, which sparked the call to Occupy Wall Street. As it turns out, the "We Are the 99 Percent" meme has been one of the sharpest objects ever to come out of the media-jammers' toolkit. It began as a riff on an analysis by economist Joseph Stiglitz of US income disparities – one percent owns 40 percent of private wealth – which was inverted into a figure showcasing the vast majority. Anonymous included the "We Are the 99 Percent" meme to online communiqués, pro- *continued p.38...*

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A conversation with Wade Davis

What we stand to lose in "Beautiful British Columbia"

by Sonya Weir

Wade Davis is a Canadian anthropologist, ethnobotanist, author and photographer whose work has focused on indigenous cultures. In 2009, he was chosen to be the speaker for the Massey Lectures for his publication The Wayfinders. *More recently, the National Geographic Society named him as one of the "Explorers for the Millennium."* ***Special Event November 10****: Wade will discuss his newest book,* Into the Silence, The Great War, Mallory, and the Conquest of Everest *at a special event hosted by the Vancouver International Writers Festival; 7:30PM, St. Andrews Wesley United Church, 1022 Nelson St, $21 (plus service charges). Call 604-629-8849 for tickets or visit vancouvertix.ca*

photo by Ryan Hill

Sonya Weir: How did you discover you wanted to work with indigenous cultures?

Wade Davis: I was always intrigued with different cultures. I grew up in Montreal at a time when the French and the English didn't speak to each another. I don't know how significant this is, but I do recall that in the neighbourhood I lived, which was a sort of suburban, commuter Anglophone community plunked on the back of an old French Canadian village, there was literally a boulevard that divided the two worlds. I remember being sent to the corner grocery store; a little mom-and-pop operation, to get cigarettes or milk or whatever my mother needed and I remember that sense of being on the edge of something. Looking across the street, I was aware that I just had to cross that street and there was a different language, a different religion and a different way of being. I was enchanted by that, at some level, but also sort of perplexed by the subtle prohibition, not from my family but from the culture itself at that time in Canada, against crossing that road. I think that was my first inkling of my interest.

And when I was 14, I was very fortunate to have had a schoolteacher in Montreal who took a handful of us to Colombia for the whole summer. The other lads were older than I was – they were 16 – and some of them were billeted with wealthy families in the city of Cali. I, fortunately, was with a more modest family up in the mountains so I didn't see the other Canadians all summer, and whereas some of them felt homesick, I felt like I had finally found home. I became completely enchanted with Latin culture. I just loved it. I think that was sort of the beginning.

And being from British Columbia and spending time in logging camps and fighting forest fires as a kid brought me into contact with the First Nations and their terrible plight and the lack of respect we had for First Nations circa 1969-70. All those things had a great impact on me. When I went off to Harvard, I didn't know what I was going to study. The day before I had to decide what my major would be, I just happened to walk through the Peabody Museum and I saw these fantastic dioramas of indigenous people from all around the world. I walked out into the sunlight and ran into a friend of mine and casually asked him what he was going to study and he said "anthropology." I said, "What's that?" He said, "Well, you study about Indians." And in a kind of Forrest Gump moment, I just said, "Oh, that's good. I'll do that." And that's how I signed on for anthropology.

SW: It has certainly shaped your entire life.

WD: It certainly did. And then I was so fortunate to fall into the orbit of two extraordinary mentors – one in anthropology and one in ethnobotany – David Maybury-Lewis, to whom I dedicated the book *The Wayfinders* and Richard Evans Schultes, about whom I wrote a biography, *One River*.

SW: What inspired you to write your new book *Into the Silence, the Great War, Mallory and the Conquest of Everest?*

WD: In 1996, I was travelling with a close friend of mine, Daniel Taylor, on an ecological survey across Tibet. It was a long journey of 4,000 miles and we happened to come by Everest just as the disaster was unfolding that Jon Krakauer wrote about in his wonderful book *Into Thin Air*. All of Kathmandu was abuzz with the significance of the tragedy and I think, for people like Daniel, who had been raised in the Himalaya, the commercialization of Everest had become a real concern, particularly since it had led to such unnecessary loss of life. The next fall, by chance, Daniel and I were back in Tibet together on the east face in the Kama Valley trying to photograph snow leopards and clouded leopards and we got caught in unusual snow conditions. Daniel began to speak of the Everest of his imaginings, which was the Everest of his father, who was a very close friend of Howard Somervell, who climbed with Mallory in 1922 and 1924. I became completely enchanted by this idea of these Englishmen in tweeds reading Shakespeare in the snow at 20,000 feet. When I returned to Vancouver, I dropped into MacLeod's bookstore and was chatting with Don, the owner, and suddenly I noticed right behind his head on a shelf of rare books, first edition accounts of the expeditions of 1921, 1922 and 1924. Those became the first purchases in a research collection for this book that would, in time, grow to over 600 volumes.

What interested me from the very start was not whether George Mallory reached the top before his death, but rather what was going through his mind as he walked towards the summit. My thought from the very beginning, and it is actually in the first letter that I wrote to my agent that resulted in the book contract with Knopf, was my sense that, for the men who lived through the mud and blood of Flanders and the Great War, life mattered less than the moments of being alive. I wasn't suggesting in any way that they were cavalier about death. Only that for them death had no mystery. They had seen so much of it that it had nothing more to teach them, save that of their own. I was not suggesting that Mallory deliberately walked to his death, as if knowing he was going to die. Not at all. He was a devoted father and he had a wonderful wife and a great life to look forward to. Rather, for that entire generation, the whole kind of gestalt of death had shifted and what mattered was how one lived. I think it is true that, after the war, the climbers were prepared to take a level of risk that would have been unimaginable before the war. By the time of that third climb, of course, Mallory was indeed a man obsessed. The mountain had become him and he had become the mountain. That alone propelled him into the void.

SW: And you have a second book coming out this fall?

WD: Yes, *The Sacred Headwaters*, which will be launched in Canada in early November. It's a photo book of what is arguably both the most beautiful and imperilled region in the country, a place that unfortunately most Canadians know little about. By a wonder of geography three of our most important salmon rivers, the Stikine,

Nass and Skeena, are born in remarkably close proximity to each other in a stunningly beautiful valley known to the Tahltan First Nation as the Sacred Headwaters. It has sometimes been described as the Serengeti of Canada because of the remarkable populations of Osborne caribou, grizzly bears and wolves. Working with the National Geographic, I have been fortunate to travel throughout the world, sometimes to as many as 30 countries in a year. But there is no place that I have experienced that in its raw beauty can compare to this extraordinary region right at our doorstep here in British Columbia. Yet as is occurring in so many wild corners of the planet, the entire Sacred Headwaters is being swept by a tsunami of industrial development.

I only wish more Canadians were aware of what is being done in their names by government and industry in the remote reaches of the country. I suppose part of the challenge lies in the fact that while Canadians love the idea of the North, few of us go there. We're the most thoroughly urban society in the industrial world. When I met with the former premiere, Gordon Campbell, I was surprised that even he had never been to the northwest quarter of the province, an area of land the size of Oregon.

Were Canadians to know what is occurring in the remote reaches of the Stikine, the Skeena and the Nass, I am quite certain they would be outraged. So in a certain sense, the book attempts to bring the country to the people, with stunning images and a text that both celebrates the remarkable resistance of the elders of the Tahltan First Nation and exposes the manner by which a small number of individuals and companies are gaming a provincial environmental assessment process transparently skewed in favour of the industrialisation of the wild.

I recruited colleagues from the international league of conservation photographers, which is a group of the best nature and wildlife photographers in the world and we raised support for them to come and do a Rapid Assessment Visual Expedition. None were paid for their efforts, but thanks to them we have a portfolio of images that is simply stunning. David Suzuki generously contributed a foreword and Bobby Kennedy Jr. wrote a very moving afterword.

This region of British Columbia is to my mind simply the most beautiful place in the country, and as significant an expanse of wilderness as remains in North America. John Muir called the lower third of the Stikine a Yosemite 120-miles-long, and he named his beloved dog after the river. Five million tourists visit The Grand Canyon of the Colorado every year; 27,000 run the river itself by raft every season. By contrast, Canada's most dramatic canyon that of the Stikine, is celebrated by international kayakers as the K2 of white water challenges. In all of history, less than 50 people have ever gone down it and no raft has ever made it.

The book is an attempt not only to celebrate this extraordinary land– it's the kind of place you could hide England in and the English would never find it – but also to alert Canadians about what is about to befall it. Americans today would give anything to reverse the egregious policies that led to the loss of Glen Canyon. In Canada, we still have time to stop massive developments that are in every way as ill conceived as the fateful decision to build that canyon dam and destroy the jewel of the American Southwest.

If Glen Canyon famously was the canyon that nobody knew, Todagin Mountain is today the mountain that nobody knows. A wildlife sanctuary in the sky, it is an upland plateau that soars above the nine pristine headwater lakes of the Iskut River, the main tributary of the Stikine. Home to the largest population of Stone Sheep in the world, with enormous populations of wolves and grizzlies, it is wildlife habitat so rich that government long ago severely restricted hunting; only bows are allowed. Were Todagin to exist in any other place it would have long ago been protected as national park or world heritage preserve. Instead, the government has authorised Imperial Met-

Canadians would be shocked to know that funds set aside to green our economy are, in fact, being used to subsidize power to a mine that, in its very conception, is certain to destroy an iconic mountain...

als, the 75th largest mining company in Canada – a small company, a handful of men, essentially – to construct an open pit copper and gold mine, processing some 30,000 tons of rock a day for thirty years. The mine will inundate Black Lake with 183 million tons of toxic tailings and generate 307 million tons of waste rock. There are 4,000 copper mines in the world. To place one on Todagin Mountain, given its location and the extraordinary economic significance and beauty of the headwater lake district that it anchors, is like drilling for oil in the Sistine Chapel.

The Red Chris is but one of the many industrial proposals threatening the Sacred Headwaters. Shell Canada seeks to extract coal bed methane from a tenure of close to a million acres, a project that could imply the construction of as many as 6,500 wells with roads and pipelines creating an industrial matrix over the entire headwater valley.

None of these developments can proceed without power. And the government has asked the people of Canada to absorb the $404 million cost of building a 287-kilovolt transmission line to nowhere – for its terminus, Bob Quinn Lake, is today nothing but a highway yard. Imperial will construct its own small line 70 miles south to tap into the provincial grid. The government will speak of expanding provincial infrastructure, Imperial of its private investment. There will be no talk of subsidies, even as Imperial begins construction of a mine that will benefit few and compromise the lives of so many. What is perhaps most scandalous is the fact that $130 million of the costs of expanding the power grid is coming from our national Green Infrastructure Fund. I think Canadians would be shocked to know that funds set aside to green our economy are, in fact, being used to subsidize power to a mine that in its very conception is certain to destroy an iconic mountain and one of the richest wildlife sanctuaries in North America.

SW: What does the word sustainability mean to you?

WD: Sustainability implies the adoption of an entirely new set of priorities, a societal imperative that ensures to the extent possible that our economic activities generate no net loss of our natural capital. It is perhaps less a goal to be achieved as much as a perspective that may allow us to change the fundamental way by which we treat the biosphere.

It's interesting to consider how we came to view the natural world as we do, as a mere commodity to be exploited at our discretion. We take this to be the norm, but viewed through the anthropological lens, it is quite anomalous. Most cultures around the world live by a very different set of values. Indeed, many consider the Earth to be animate, alive and responsive to the needs of humans just as humans have reciprocal obligations to the lands that cradle their destinies and inspire their dreams.

Our mindset can be traced back to the Greeks, but it found its perfect distillation in the Enlightenment. When Descartes said that all that exists is mind and matter, with a single phrase he de-animated the world and swept away all instincts for myth, magic, mysticism and metaphor. As Saul Bellow said, "Science made a housecleaning of belief." The liberation of the individual from the tyranny of faith and from the potential tyranny of the collective was the sociological equivalent of splitting the atom. But with the freedom came other challenges, alienation and isolation, a sort of cosmic loneliness as we abandoned the protective cloak of comfort that community and belief and faith provided. The important point is that, in de-animating the Earth, we granted ourselves licence to violate the natural world in a manner that would have been unimaginable to other people.

I wonder how different things might be if each of us had to confront directly the consequences of our demands on the natural world. Imagine if there was a law saying that before any person or company can destroy a mountain, pollute a river, tear down a forest, or violate an alpine lake, he or she or the entire board of directors of the enterprise must take their children to the place, camp for a week and listen as the local elders explain what the proposed industrial actions will do to the land and imply for the lives of their children and grandchildren.

Imagine if all of the children got together, apart from the adults, and made a deal, a fair exchange, as children are inclined to do. For every tree destroyed on Tahltan lands, for example, the kid from the city would sacrifice one of his mother's favourite flowering shrubs from her garden. For every drop of toxic waste placed into a river or lake in Tahltan territory, an equivalent discharge would be dripped into the water supply of their suburban neighbourhood or into a family swimming pool that all those kids enjoy. This idea, of course, sounds far-fetched, even ridiculous, to the urban ear, but it is exactly what the Tahltan elder James Dennis means when he says, "Our land is our kitchen. When you bring your poison onto our land you are poisoning our kitchen."

Such fairness and balance ought to be the norm, the way we, as Canadians, take measure *continued p.37...*

Help me to *change the world*

I invite you to participate in a new dream for humanity, one in which all of us can live in harmony, truth, and love. In this dream, people of all religions and all philosophies are not just welcome, but respected. It doesn't matter whether you believe in Christ, Moses, Allah, Brahma, Buddha or any other being or master; everybody is welcome to share this dream. Each one of us has our own beliefs, our own point of view. There are billions of different points of view, but it's the same light, the same *force of life* behind each one of us.

If you feel the truth in these words, then I invite you to open your heart and help me to change the world. Of course, the very first question is how are you going to change the world? The answer is easy. By changing *your* world. When I ask you to help me to change the world, I'm not talking about planet Earth. I'm referring to the world that exists in your head. You will not change the world if you don't change your own world first. The change begins with you. You will change the world by loving yourself, by enjoying life, by making your personal world a dream of heaven. And I ask you for your help because you are the only one who can make this change.

Don Miguel Ruiz, author of The Four Agreements. Photo by Isabelle Oliver.

If you decide that you want to help me change the world, the easiest way is by practising five agreements: *Be impeccable with your word. Don't take anything personally. Don't make assumptions. Always do your best. Be skeptical, but learn to listen.* These are the tools to change your world, to change *the* world, and they are nothing but pure common sense. If you practise these five agreements, if you make them your way of life, there won't be any more war in your head. There won't be any more war with your loved ones. There will be peace.

By adopting these Five Agreements, your world becomes better and you want to share your happiness with the people you love. But changing the world is not about changing the secondary characters in your life story. If you want to change the world, the way to do it is by changing the main character. When you change the main character, you change the message that you deliver to yourself. Then just like magic, all the secondary characters start to change, because the message that you deliver to them changes.

You deliver a message every time you speak. The question is do you deliver the truth or do you deliver lies? When the message you deliver comes from truth and love, you are happier. And just by being happier, everyone benefits because your joy, your happiness, your heaven are contagious. When you are happy, the people around you are happy too and it inspires them to change their own world.

Every human uses the world to deliver a message. The message we deliver is our legacy and our legacy can be love; it can be joy; it can be happiness. When we were children, we received a wonderful world and it's our turn to offer our children and grandchildren a planet where they can live as wonderfully and as well as we do now. We can stop destroying our planet; we can stop destroying one another. We are meant to love one another, not to hate one another. Let's stop believing that our differences make us superior or inferior to one another. Let's not believe that lie. Let's not be afraid that our different colours make us different people. Who cares? It's just another lie.

> You will not change the world if you don't change your own world first. The change begins with you. You will change the world by loving yourself, by enjoying life, by making your personal world a dream of heaven.

We don't have to believe all the lies and superstitions that control our lives. We can return to the truth and be messengers of truth. It's not true that we come to this planet to suffer. This beautiful planet Earth is not a valley of tears. This is the time to end all the lies and superstitions that are not helping anybody. The legacy that we leave to our children and grandchildren can be magnificent. We can change our whole way of thinking and show them how to have a love affair with life. Our new way of thinking can replace all the lies and take us to a wonderful place to live life.

Wherever I go, I hear people say we come here with a mission, that we have something to do or transcend in this life. I believe that we come here with a mission, but our mission is not really to transcend anything. The mission we have is to make ourselves happy. The "how" could be millions of different ways of doing what we love to do, but the mission of our life is to enjoy every single moment of our life. Sooner or later, our physical bodies will no longer exist. We only have a few sunrises, a few sunsets, a few full moons that we can enjoy. This is our time to be alive, to be fully present, to enjoy ourselves, to enjoy one another.

Humans can live in harmony. I know we have our differences, but we can respect one another's differences. We can agree to work together, knowing that each of us has our own point of view. It's incredible what we can do if we really want to do it. All we need is to be aware of what we are doing, and to return to the authenticity we were born with. *Help me to change the world* is an invitation to be authentic, to follow your heart, to be free of superstitions and lies. And I'm not asking you to *try* to change the world. Don't try; just do it. Take the action today.

In the last century, science and technology have grown so fast, but psychology has stayed far behind. It's time for psychology to catch up with science and technology. It's time to change our beliefs about the human mind; what I see right now is almost an emergency because with computers and the Internet the way they are right now, lies can go all around the world very quickly and get completely out of control. The time is coming when humans will no longer believe in lies. We begin with ourselves, but the goal is to change the entire humanity. But how can we change the entire humanity if we don't change our own world first? Of course, it's not easy to separate, because in reality we have to do both at the same time.

Then let's make a difference in this world. By adopting the Five Agreements, we create peace in our head, in our own world and thereby help to create peace in the entire world. How long will it take for the entire world to change? Two, or three or four generations? The truth is that we don't care how long it will take. We are not in a hurry, but we have no time to lose. Help me to change the world.

Excerpted and adapted from **The Fifth Agreement © Miguel Angel Ruiz**, M.D., **Jose Luis Ruiz** and **Janet Mills**. Reprinted by permission of Amber-Allen Publishing, Inc.

November 19: See Don Miguel Ruiz in Vancouver. Musical guest **Kuba Oms**. Unity of Vancouver, 5840 Oak St. Tickets at www.kubaoms.eventbrite.com

Fate or will?

Are we the masters of our own fate or is there a destiny unfolding for us? We often hear ourselves and others pondering what we are supposed to be doing in this lifetime. What is our path, what is our purpose? Some just seem to know while others can spend a lifetime trying to figure it out. Then there are those who believe we create our own reality; what we have in our lives is what we have created.

These are two paradoxical positions. I like to believe the truth lies at the heart of the paradox. In other words, I believe *both* that we are the creators of our lives *and* that we have a destiny or purpose in our lives. It can be a little hard to get our heads around this. It is a little like a pianist who does different things with each hand, creating a beautiful composition in the process.

How does this work in life? Consider that our souls are eternal and currently manifest in physical form, housed in our bodies. Our souls are ancient and wise and have chosen to have this Earthly experience for a reason. It may be for our own growth and learning or perhaps we are to play a part in the learning experiences of others, and they in ours. The trick is we are not given this information when we arrive and there are no answer keys we can turn to. Life provides the raw material and it is for us to choose what to do with it and how to think about it.

Destiny unfolding or creators of our reality? Truth is no one knows for sure. However, if we believe a little of both, it can serve us very well. When you come from that place of being master of your fate, you can be conscious and responsible, setting goals and creating the life you want.

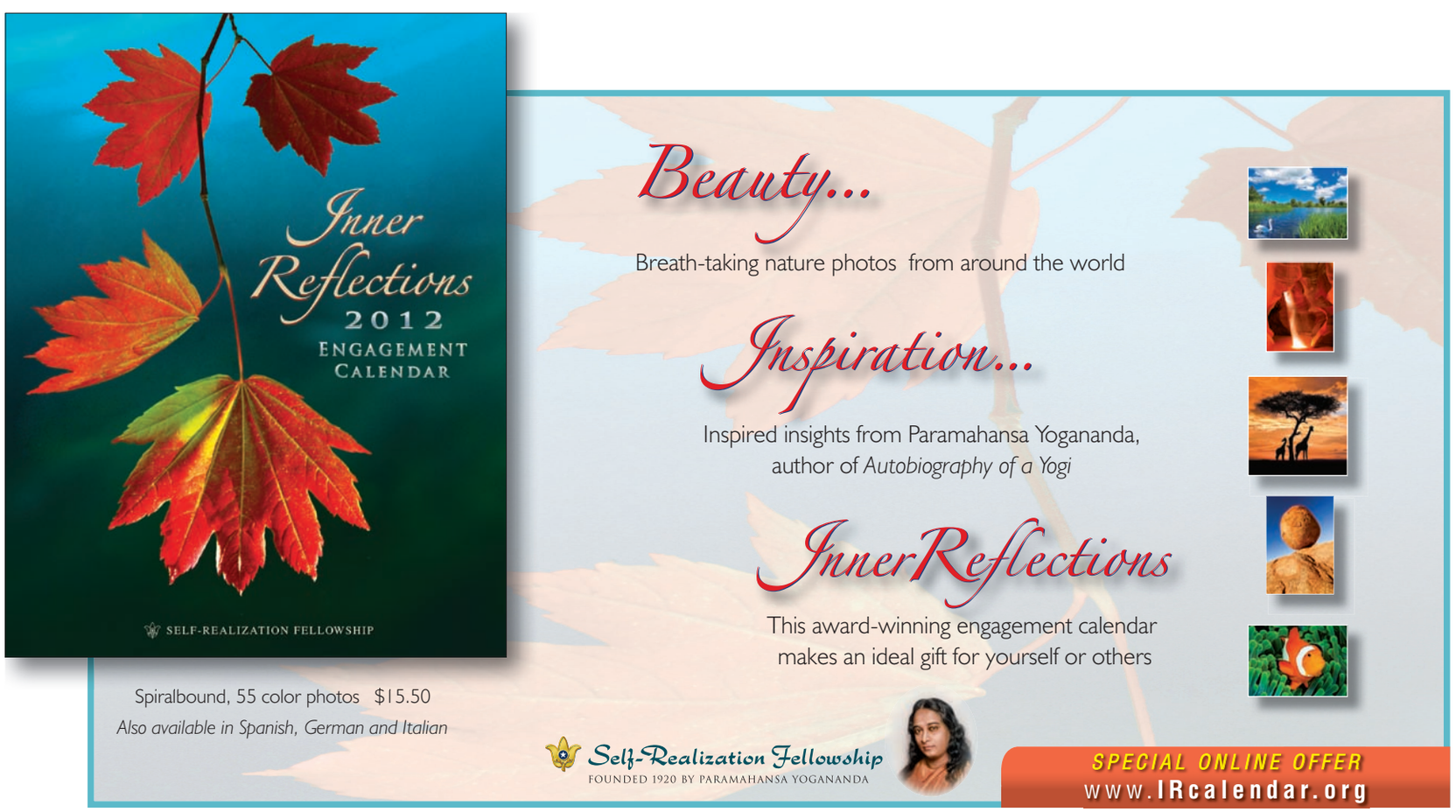
If you do this, yet somehow still feel unfulfilled, thinking there has to be something more, it may be your soulful or spiritual side is whispering it is time to wake up to something beyond the current life you are living that wants to find expression. Sometimes, you think you have it all figured out and suddenly things go sideways. The happily-ever-after, til death do us part relationship comes crashing down or the job disappears and we bemoan the fact this is not how it was supposed to be. Yet this may be exactly where our destiny is expressing *its self*. Much as we may have chosen our path, it may be that something on our soul's agenda is overriding what we had planned.

It's a little like downhill skiing. Sometimes, you ski in a very controlled way and other times, you just go with the hill, surrendering to it and letting it carry you. Sometimes, we plan our lives and control what happens and other times we need to surrender to what is actually happening. We can either have the attitude that sh*t happens and perhaps become angry, depressed, anxious and negative about life or we can consider the possibility that what is happening may be a kind of divine course correction that will ultimately serve our highest good whether it feels like that now or not.

Our souls are ancient and wise and have chosen to have this Earthly experience for a reason… Life provides the raw material and it is for us to choose what to do with it and how to think about it.

Ironically, even when destiny intervenes, we can still be masters of our fate. This is because the *way in which we choose to interpret* and respond to what happens to us will absolutely determine the *quality* of our lives.

Gwen Randall-Young is an author and psychotherapist in private practice. For articles and information about her books, CDs and the new "Creating Healthy Relationships" series, visit www.gwen.ca. See display ad this issue.



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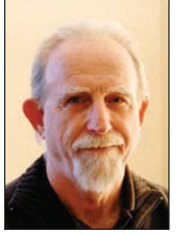

Mac McLaughlin

ZODIAC

StarWise November 2011

THE SUN MOVES through tropical Scorpio from October 23 to November 22. Ruled by fiery Mars and co-ruled by the deep and mysterious Pluto, we find Scorpio natives are naturally inclined towards leadership roles and power positions. It's never halfway; it's either all the way or no way with Scorpio. There are some interesting totems associated with this sign, the first being the serpent, or scorpion. This one says, "Sting me, I sting you back." Revenge, dominance, control, manipulation, violence, chaos and death are their game if unindividuated. The phoenix is probably the best known symbol of Scorpio and it implies the awesome regenerative and healing power that many Scorpios possess. Out of the ashes, a new life form is created. Where many give up, usually Scorpio is just getting warmed up. Researchers, scientists, doctors and surgeons and others that may literally transform your life come under the heading of this sign.

The eagle is the next symbol of Scorpio and it represents the purity and spiritual heights that can be attained for no other flies as close to the sun as this regal bird. The

ARIES Mar 21 - Apr 19
Mars forms a grand triangle with Jupiter and Pluto mid-month and with Mars moving through Virgo, you will be very busy. You're able to put it all together, though, as you organize and plan for your future through a steady application of your willpower.

TAURUS Apr 20 - May 21
The full moon on November 10 takes place in your sign bringing important revelations. The moon travels through the nakshatra (star group) named Bharani and its shakti (power) is to take things away. Go with the flow and let go of whatever.

GEMINI May 22 - Jun 20
Scattered hither and yon seeking treasures of the intellect, Gemini natives are ever curious, eternally restless and compelled to constantly seek that which is to be known and discovered. Romance beckons thee along with possible controversy.

CANCER Jun 21 - Jul 22
The full moon on November 10 will help illuminate your understanding as to where you stand with others, such as a sweetheart, friend or work associate. Matters related to home and family intensify and it might not be negative. A busy autumn is predicted.

LEO Jul 23 - Aug 22
Career and home activities increase dynamically. You must find the balance and live within it. Earning potential increases, but does it mean freedom or drudgery? A sacrifice of sorts could be the remedy. Very good communication opportunities present themselves in early November.

VIRGO Aug 23 - Sep 22
Mars visits Virgo in the last three weeks of November. You will be busy, productive and constructive. Keep in mind that the down side of Mars energy is accidents and injuries if we overstep our abilities or let frustration get the best of us.

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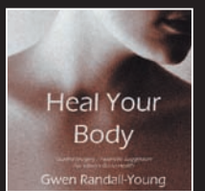

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eagle-type Scorpios are more likely to be the ones working quietly behind the scenes, ensconced deeply in their studies, with no time for pomp, strut and ceremony.

We might ponder why these folks are so intense about all that they do and their intentions, whether in the light or darkness. In ancient times, the Sun's passage through this sector of the sky signalled its death and it would be resurrected again in the early springtime. The cycle of growth has seemingly stopped and death and decay set into place refurbishing the soil for the next round of life's activities. Beyond anything and everything we know, the life force is the most powerful phenomena and all of life will struggle valiantly to the very last breath in order to keep it. Scorpio types are born into this energy and once focused and directed, their power of concentration, amalgamated with their dynamic will power, produces some of the most remarkable and memorable people on the planet, for good or bad.

Being a fixed water sign, it is often difficult for Scorpios to effect change in their own lives. Learning to surrender to the will of God and acquiescing to the universal plan we have crafted for ourselves in our previous incarnations is the healing path for all those that suffer. Scorpio is an old soul and definitely on its way home after its lengthy Earthly sojourns.

LIBRA Sep 23 - Oct 22
Saturn continues his sojourn through your sign, as he helps you to polish and refine what you're all about. It is marriage or divorce time, as we marry that which we love and divorce what is no longer worthy. It's all good.

SCORPIO Oct 23 - Nov 21
The full moon on November 10 is important, as it will bring up what is needed most. The moon travels through Bharani the nakshatra (star group) that has the power to take things away. It is a time of intense internal perusal.

SAGITTARIUS Nov 22 - Dec 21
Mercury and Venus combine in your sign throughout most of the month, enhancing life in many ways. Romantic and intellectual activities keep you on the move, happily so. The solar eclipse on November 24 in Sagittarius will herald a series of important changes.

CAPRICORN Dec 22 - Jan 19
Mars and Jupiter cast fine energy into your sign indicating a powerful and active time in which you can truly accomplish all that you wish. Be careful what you wish for though, as it could take too much of your time and energy.

AQUARIUS Jan 20 - Feb 19
The full moon on November 10 illuminates your solar houses ruling career, family and real estate. Speaking of real estate, your inner state of consciousness may need some refreshing and now is the time to do so. Life amps up and all kinds of people pop up.

PISCES Feb 20 - Mar 20
Mars moves through your opposite sign Virgo prompting action and reaction. Travel and romance houses are hot as well. Your career sector gets a boost and you should be competitive. Intellectual stimulation and a hunger to learn and discover propel you along.

Mac McLaughlin has been a practising, professional astrologer for more than four decades. His popular **Straight Stars** column ran in Vancouver's largest weekly newspaper for 11 years. Email mac@macsstars.com or call 604-731-1109

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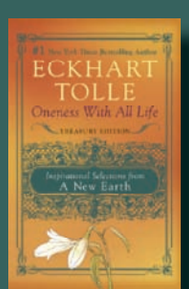

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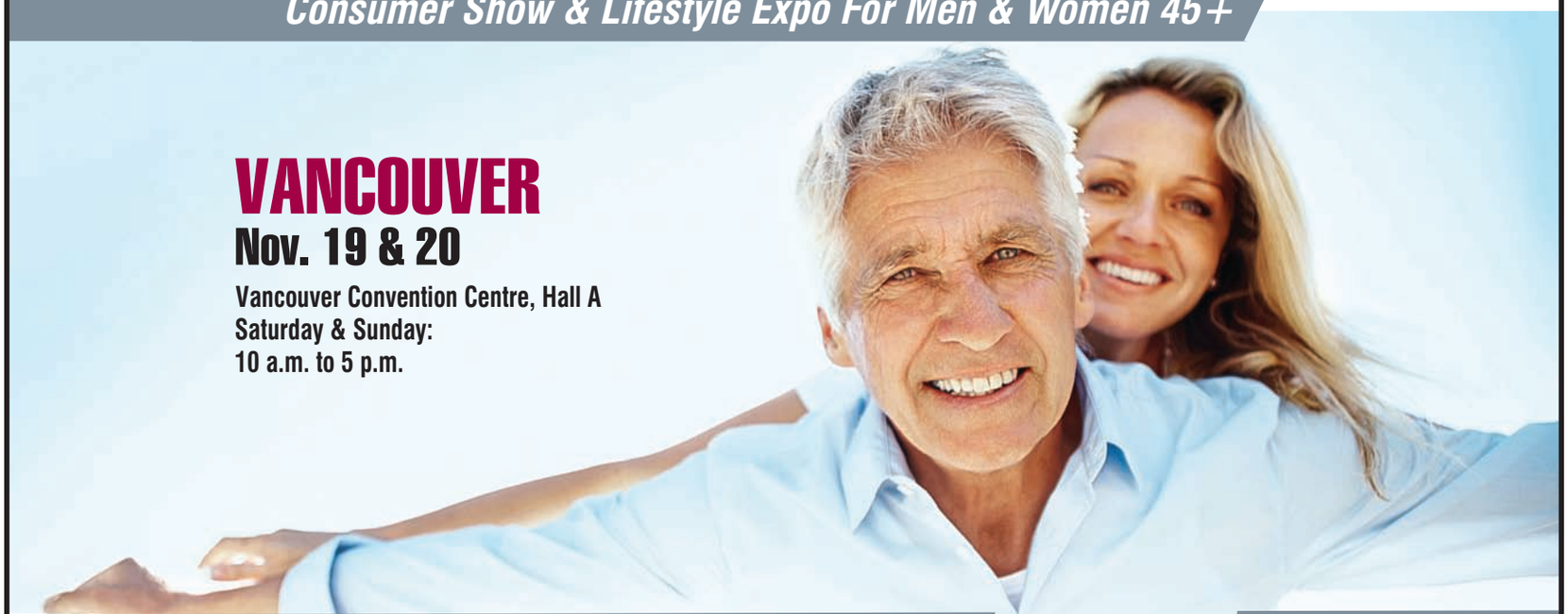

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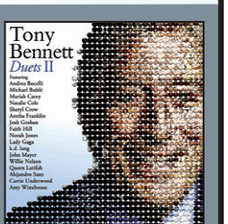

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Canadian Health Food Association Notes

In the October issue of Common Ground*, we featured a special editorial supplement representing a call to protect our natural health products. Various industry stakeholders shared their perspectives on the serious impact that Health Canada's Natural Health Products Directorate regulations are having on the industry. See the complete editorial feature at www.commonground.ca (Issue #243, October).*

The Canadian Health Food Association (CHFA) was also invited to participate, but we received their response after our October press deadline. The CHFA's editorial contribution is below.

The Canadian Health Food Association (CHFA) is Canada's largest national trade association dedicated to the natural health and organic products industries. With a membership that includes over 1,000 suppliers, wholesalers, distributors and retailers, CHFA actively represents the industries that contribute five billion to the Canadian economy.

With over 70 percent of Canadians using natural health products (NHPs), CHFA is also proud to recognize November as National Health Food Month, an annual initiative that shines a spotlight on the demonstrated benefits of natural health products and organic food. Health Food Month serves as a reminder to Canadians that natural health products and organic foods are safe and effective, federally regulated and an integral part of promoting and maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

All natural health products must undergo a pre-market review before they may be sold in Canada. This process requires that evidence supporting the safety, efficacy or any claims made and quality of the product be submitted to the Natural Health Products Directorate for assessment in order to be licensed. Canadians can identify products that have been licensed for sale in Canada by looking for the eight-digit Natural Product Number (NPN), Exemption Number (EN) or Homeopathic Medicine Number (DIN-HM) on the label.

Licensing becomes increasingly important when considering the number of Canadians who use natural health products on a daily basis. The unfortunate reality is that many don't realize, and often take for granted, the threats to the availability of these products. Government legislation defines natural health products as a subset of drugs, which can be confusing for consumers, policy makers and the media.

The longstanding legislative priority for CHFA has been to remove natural health products as a subset of drugs under the existing Food and Drugs Act. Those involved in the industry know this request has remained constant for over a decade. In the late 1990s, CHFA and the industry were very active with educating key government representatives about the uniqueness of natural health products.

Following this, the Standing Committee on Health released a report in 1998 stating natural health products were neither foods nor drugs and the Food and Drugs Act should be modified accordingly. Thirteen years later, CHFA is still working to see this recommendation applied. CHFA continues to work with the government ensuring the collective voice of the industry is heard and consumer safety remains a priority.

To stay informed or to become involved, we invite you to join the conversation by friending us on facebook, following us on Twitter or visiting our website at www.chfa.ca

Editor's note: Natural health products have only recently come under the jurisdiction of drugs via Health Canada's recently formed Natural Health Products Directorate (NHPD). Natural health products were under the food category until 2004, when they were more accessible to the public.

CHFA People of Excellence 2011Award winners

As part of the Conference program at Expo East last month in Toronto, CHFA took the opportunity to recognize the achievements of member companies and their employees who have made a difference to their businesses and the industry.

Winner of the CHFA Hall of Fame Award: Thomas Greither, president of Flora Manufacturing and Distributing Ltd.

This year's recipient of the CHFA Hall of Fame Award is Thomas Greither, president of Flora Manufacturing and Distributing Ltd. Thomas was recognized with this achievement for his many years of hard work as well as his impressive contribution and dedication to the growth and development of the natural health and organic products industry.

Additional award winners

CHFA Brock Elliott Award For Excellence in Retailing – Nature's Emporium
Preferred Nutrition Award for Excellence in Retail Sales – Teresa D'Addario, Nature's Emporium
Jack Gahler Memorial Awards for Excellence – Field: Neil Jacobs, Peak Performance Products Inc. Inside: Shelagh Bailey, Preferred Nutrition
Gordon Storie Memorial Bursary – Darcy McConnell, Vita Health Fresh Market
CHFA Supplier of Excellence Award – Body Plus Nutritional Products Inc.
CHFA Spotlight Award in the Category of Innovation – Retailer: Nature's Emporium. Supplier: Genuine Health
CHFA Exhibit Awards – Large: Nature's Way. Medium: Theobroma Chocolat. Small: North American Hemp Company
People's Choice Award – Giddy Yoyo Chocolate

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Lucy Sharratt

Feds set to contaminate food supply with GM foods

The Canadian government is proposing to allow the contamination of our food supply with genetically engineered foods that have not been approved for safe eating in Canada. This is not a joke or an exaggeration. Agriculture Canada has organized "stakeholder" consultations on what it calls "Low Level Presence" and has opened a comment period until November 25.

The Canadian government wants to allow 0.1 percent (or higher) of our food to be contaminated with genetically modified (GM) foods that have not been approved by Health Canada for safe human consumption. The GM foods will have been approved for safety in at least one other country, but not yet evaluated as safe by our own regulators. The federal government calls it "Low Level Presence" (LLP) and argues this "low level" of contamination from unapproved GM foods is not harmful. But how can it be sure? And why would our government want to do this?

Grain traders in Canada want the easy flow of Canadian commodities around the world, but pesky GM contamination keeps shutting down our global markets. Currently, Canada has "zero-tolerance" for contamination of our food supply by GM foods that have not been approved by Health Canada. This is obviously sound public health and safety policy, but our zero-tolerance is getting in the way of the Minister of Agriculture's efforts to convince other countries to accept our GM contaminated food. The majority of countries worldwide have not approved any of the GM foods we produce. The argument is if Canada has a zero-tolerance policy, how can we ask other countries to change their zero-tolerance policies and accept GM contamination from Canada? Agriculture Canada says we need to be the first country in the world to accept this type of GM contamination so we can ask our trading partners to do the same.

The federal government says it will look at the regulatory system of the country where the GM food in question is approved and decide if it trusts that system. Additionally, if a corporation has already asked for safety approval in Canada and has submitted its data, even if Health Canada has not yet looked at it, the government can decide to accept contamination from that GM food. There are three slightly different "proposals" for how this "Low Level Presence" could be introduced, but all of them mean the same thing: unapproved GM food on grocery store shelves.

With LLP, the Canadian government is proposing to ignore its own system for safety evaluation of GM foods, a system that is widely criticized as inadequate, but which at least requires foods be declared as safe before we eat them. Legalizing contamination from unsafe GM foods is the end of any pretence from our government that it cares about the health and safety of Canadians when it comes to genetically modified foods. Clearly, the government's trade agenda trumps safety.

> Canada has "zero-tolerance" for GM foods not approved by Health Canada…but our zero-tolerance is getting in the way of the Minister of Agriculture's efforts to convince other countries to accept our GM-contaminated food.

According to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, "Canadian consumers enjoy one of the safest food safety systems in the world" and LLP consultation documents note "Food safety is a high priority for the Government of Canada." However, our government has now decided it does not necessarily need to evaluate the safety of all the GM food we eat. The question now is will we let this happen?

Lucy Sharratt is the coordinator for the Canadian Biotechnology Network. www.cban.ca

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2:00-3:30 pm Nutrition and the Environment
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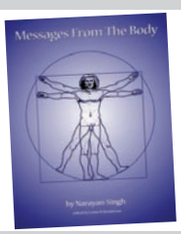

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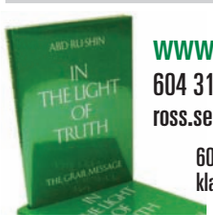

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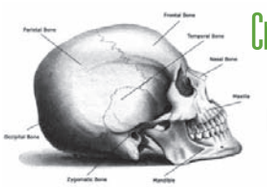

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...***Wade Davis*** *from pg. 23*

of the impacts and potential of these various industrial projects. Unfortunately, we live by quite another code of conduct. This does not imply that we have no voice and no obligations. These projects will go ahead only if we accept that people who have never been on the land, who have no history or connection to the country, may legally secure the right to come in and by the very nature of their enterprises leave in their wake a cultural and physical landscape utterly transformed and desecrated.

They will go ahead only if we continue to endorse a process that grants mining concessions, often initially for trivial sums, to speculators from distant cities, even as we place no cultural or market value on the land itself. They will go ahead if we maintain that the cost of destroying a natural asset, or its inherent worth if left intact, need not have a metric in the economic calculations that support the industrialization of the wild. They will go ahead if we remain committed to the notion that no private company has to compensate the public for what it does to the commons, the forests, mountains, and rivers, which by definition belong to everyone. That it merely requires bureaucratic permission to proceed.

They will go ahead as long as we continue to embrace a mindset that has no place in a world in which wild lands are becoming increasingly rare and valuable, even as we strive as a species to live in a sustainable manner on a planet we have come to recognize as being resilient but not inviolable.

The people of the Sacred Headwaters, the men and women of the Tahltan First Nation – all those who have rallied against these developments – have a very different way of thinking about the land. For them, the Sacred Headwaters is a neighbourhood, at once their grocery store and sanctuary, their church and schoolyard, their cemetery and country club. They believe that the people with greatest claim to ownership of the valley are the generations as yet unborn. The Sacred Headwaters will be their nursery.

The elders, almost all whom grew up on the land, have formally called for the end of all industrial activity in the valley and the creation of the Sacred Headwaters Tribal Heritage Area. In the end, what is at stake is the future of one of the most extraordinary regions in all of North America. The fate of the Sacred Headwaters transcends the interests of local residents, provincial agencies, mining companies and those few among the First Nations who favour industrial development at any cost. The voices of all Canadians and of all people deserve to be heard. Surely, no amount of methane gas, copper or gold can compensate for the sacrifice of a place that could be the Sacred Headwaters of all Canadians and indeed all citizens of the world.

SW: What did you make of Bolivia's initiative "The Law of Mother Earth?"

WD: I think it's idealistic and noble and an indication of how people feel and that they are frustrated. I think social change is happening. I'd like to think we will come around to a new appreciation of the limits of the world we live in. When I wrote the book *The Wayfinders* and did the 2009 Massey Lectures, the publisher added a subtitle to the book: *Why Ancient Wisdom Matters in the Modern World* and it sort of forced me to answer that question. In the end, I came down to two words: climate change. What I meant by that was not to suggest that we go back to a pre-industrial past or that any indigenous people or any culture around the world be limited in their access to the genius of modernity and the brilliance of science. What I was really trying to suggest is that the very existence of these other ways of thinking, these other ways of being, these other visions of life itself, in a sense, show us there are alternatives and it puts the lie to those who essentially say, "We cannot change" as we know we all must change the fundamental way we interact with the natural world.

Independent Media Steve Anderson

Weaving a Web-like world

The other day I decided to visit the site of "Occupy Vancouver." I found a network of service tents scattered among open spaces, filled with people engaging in what seemed like unending conversations about politics, democracy and the future. An ethos of sharing and collaborating pervaded the space and people seemed to revel in each other's company.

Like an estimated 1,500 other cities around the world, Vancouver residents came together on October 15 to express their frustration over the greed and corruption of the one percent wealthiest people and the institutions that act in their interest.

I've only visited Occupy Vancouver three times, but each time it has changed and evolved. I noticed what appears to be a community that operates on co-management, collaboration, sharing, trust and overall goodwill. There's a fair bit of complexity as well; a network of 22 committees leads the work in key areas, with major decisions being made in their General Assembly. The committees are open to anyone who shows up. In short, the space seems to function based on a gift economy where people contribute based on their abilities, desires and needs.

At first I couldn't put my finger on it, but I soon realized that Occupy Vancouver reminds me of the "unconferences" I've attended. Unconferences are a kind of event common in the software industry. At unconferences, a topic is agreed to in advance and participants organize themselves into sessions on the day of the event. Unconferences were inspired by the non-hierarchical, collaborative nature of open-source software development and the Web in general.

In a similar way, Occupy Vancouver feels like an ongoing space infused with Web values and practices. Its structure of participation mirrors that of the online encyclopedia Wikipedia, which is one hundred percent produced by volunteers. While Wikipedia entries are open to be edited by any Internet user, most people participate just by viewing and maybe sharing entries; a smaller group of about 90,000 people actively edit pages and a still smaller group makes the vast majority of edits and upholds the rules.

At Occupy Vancouver, a large group of thousands of people shares material online, attends key gatherings, and engages with services. A smaller group attends the General Assembly and helps govern the space and an even smaller group puts in the daily effort needed to keep the committees and services operating. Both Wikipedia and Occupy Vancouver survive in part because they make participation easy – they let participants engage at the level they're comfortable with and in a manner meaningful to them.

In a way, this shouldn't be surprising. Occupiers make heavy use of online tools like Facebook, Twitter and Google maps to organize, collaborate and to get their message out. Many of those involved grew up with the Internet. To many of the occupiers, the structure of participation at Occupy Vancouver probably feels more normal than what you find in a typical workplace or educational institution.

Will it last? I have no idea, but I think these social practices are addictive and contagious. "Occupying Together" could prefigure a new kind of society where people are appreciated for their unique talents and skills, where roles are more flexible and engaging and where the world as a whole feels more like the Web.

Steve Anderson is the national coordinator for OpenMedia.ca He has written for **The Tyee, Toronto Star**, **Epoch Times** and **Adbusters**. steve@openmedia.ca, www.FacebookSteve.com, www.SteveOnTwitter.com

...***Olson*** *from pg. 21*

pagandizing their solidarity with the masses. *Adbusters* kicked it up a further notch in visibility and Anonymous quickly endorsed the notion of Occupy Wall Street.

With social disparities on the rise in industrial democracies around the world, the 99 percent meme has gone global to the 'Occupy Everywhere' movement. It fits seamlessly with the 99 percent alluded to in the final scenes of *V for Vendetta* where the "restless many" peacefully confront the truncheon-wielding protectors of the "prosperous few." The V mask now shows up in photos of protests of all kinds across the world, from Santiago to Seoul to Seattle.

The Hollywood V creates chaos in an attempt to spark a new order. Needless to say, the agenda of anyone wearing a V mask to a public protest is as cryptic as his or her identity. An undercover cop, an agent provocateur, a weekend activist with nightmares about facial recognition software, a comic-book fanboy – one size fits all. At the Occupy Vancouver event on October 15, about a dozen V's sprinkled the crowd, from adults to kids. After approaching a few for a photograph, I felt slightly creeped out by the pale, grinning face – the same way clowns creep me out. The mask seems to carry a tacit reproach to power. As John F. Kennedy once said, "Those who make peaceful revolution impossible will make violent revolution inevitable."

Critics insist a store-bought plastic mask endorsing revolutionary beliefs is a contradiction in terms. Especially considering that every V mask purchase makes a profit for one of the world's largest media conglomerates, Time-Warner. Ironically, the company owns DC Comics, which published the Alan Moore-David Lloyd miniseries in the United States. It also owns Warner Brothers, which released the film adaptation. The vertically organized company "owns the rights to the image and receives a licensing fee for each mask sold," according to a recent report in the *New York Times*.

The *Times* piece hints this contradiction delegitimizes Guy Fawkes-masked protestors. Yet it's a trivial truth that almost anything anyone does is within the orbit of the military-industrial-financial-entertainment complex, including protesting against it. The marketing world is very good at capturing and repackaging dangerous dissent as safe hipster cool. Consider the iconic photo of Che Guevara in a black beret, which has gone from a dorm room poster to a T-shirt design to the soda drink Revolution. Perhaps the V for Vendetta mask will become another tiresome visual cliché as its visibility grows – a pop-culture meme emptied of its original meaning. Or perhaps it will retain its archetypal, Trickster-like power, taking on a darker or lighter aspect depending on the next stages of global activism.

Writer Allan Moore, unhappy with the film adaptation of V for Vendetta, had his name removed from the Wachowski brothers' slick product. His collaborator, comic artist David Lloyd, was happier with the film and its social effects. He recently told the blog Comics Alliance that activists are "resisting oppression the best way they know how" by employing the image of his mask. He hoped the character V would continue to be a "symbol of protest for all those who feel they need to use it as such."

The word "person" derives from the Latin "persona," or mask. In Classical Greece, a Greek chorus was a group of masked performers who would stand on the side of the stage, commenting on the dramatic events in narration and song. "In many of these plays, the chorus expressed to the audience what the main characters could not say, such as their hidden fears or secrets. The chorus often provided other characters with the insight they needed," according to Wikipedia.

You could say the ambiguous image of V performs a similar function in postmodern dissent, calling attention to fears and official secrets that are marginalized in mainstream discourse. The growing numbers of demonstrators wearing the V masks may be as much a symptom of our troubled times as a symbolic vector for change.

Perhaps one day, the plastic V mask will become a nostalgic artifact, a fondly remembered relic from the first time the restless many – masked and unmasked – peacefully rose up across the globe and demanded accountability from the prosperous few. With Occupation Everywhere, the template for unified global dissent is now out there. It's been beta-tested in hundreds of cities across the world. Perhaps what the world witnessed on October 15 was the initial ripple, rather than the first wave.

As V said, you can't kill an idea.

www.geoffolson.com

Finding oneself

Often, when watching a feature film, the shaping hand of the director is barely noticeable. There's a certain sameness, particularly with Hollywood stuff, in the tone and treatment of the subject, which itself is often a rehashed or plagiarized storyline. The movie could have been made by any number of directors. There's no chance of that watching *The Skin I Live In (La piel que habito)*, a most bizarre story of twisted obsession, which recently opened VIFF. Mixing myth, melodrama and psycho-thriller, this erotically charged study in transgression has the distinctive imprint of Spanish auteur Pedro Almodóvar.

A seasoned Antonio Banderas plays a brilliant plastic surgeon testing a synthetic skin on a mysterious, beautiful woman (a lithe Elena Anaya) in the isolation of his luxurious home. We are left guessing as to the details of the relationship between the two characters, creating a fluid and ever-shifting understanding of their interactions and motivations. Early on, we see the doctor admiring the curvaceous, body-suited woman from his bedroom on a huge screen. It's a decidedly odd doctor-patient relationship. But who is she? Why does he keep her locked up? Is she happy?

From *The Skin I Live In* with Antonio Banderas and Elena Anaya

The title of the film could as much refer to the way the story unfurls – like peeling an onion – to reveal the answers to these questions and the woman's relationship with the doctor. The enjoyment of the film is in the storytelling even if the plot is unnecessarily elaborate. It's best seen without previously watching the trailer which, as usual, gives away far too much or, for that matter, having read the reviews.

Walking the *Camino de Santiago*, the medieval pilgrim trail across the North of Spain, can be a transformative life experience. In *The Way*, father-and-son team Emilio Estevez and Martin Sheen follow in the footsteps of hundreds of thousands of others, crossing the 800-kilometre *Camino* from the Pyrenées on the eastern border, across the grinding flatlands of the Spanish *Meseta* in central Spain, through the rolling hills of Galicia in the West to arrive at the wonderfully preserved medieval city of Santiago de Compostela.

The drama they shot en route has been described as an "uplifting road-movie-on-foot." Sheen plays Tom, a grumpy US doctor, who comes to Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port in France, to collect the remains of his son who has been killed in an accident at the start of the walk (writer-director Estevez also plays Sheen's on-screen son). Instead of returning home, Tom decides to honour his son by carrying his ashes the length of the *Camino*. As he walks, Tom finds himself unexpectedly drawn to other pilgrims – played by Deborah Kara Unger, Yorick van Wageningen and James Nesbitt – each of them dealing with their own personal problems, and re-evaluating his "Californian bubble life." I haven't seen it myself yet, but a reliable source tells me it captures the spirit of the pilgrimage well.

Finally, congratulations to the VIFF award-winners this year: tense Iranian drama *A Separation* (Rogers People's Choice Award); Harry Belafonte biopic *Sing Your Song* (Most Popular Documentary); Hudson Bay set *People of a Feather* (Environmental Film Audience Award); intense one-night-stand drama *Nuit #1* (Shaw Media Award for Best Canadian Feature); energy policy critique *Peace Out* (NFB Most Popular Canadian Documentary); Tibetan road journey *The Sun-Beaten Path* (Dragons and Tigers Award for Young Cinema); *We Ate the Children Last* (Canadian Short Film), and fatherhood comedy *Starbuck* (Most Popular Canadian Film).

Robert Alstead made the Vancouver documentary **You Never Bike Alone** www.youneverbikealone.com He writes at www.2020Vancouver.com

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Free demonstration of effective pain elimination. See the Yuen Method Work on the Spot. With Colette Stefan, Sheraton Guilford, Surrey. Nov 4-6: Level 2 & 3, Surrey. Dec teleconferences. Info at www.crystalinevision.com, colette@crystalinvevision.com, 1-306-584-9135.

NOV 3, 12-15
Heal Others / Heal Yourself with Christine Upchurch of the Northwest Reconnective Healing Center and The Reconnection. Free Seattle presentation, November 3. In Vancouver November 12-13 she will be teaching Level I/II Seminar. November 13-14, Level III Seminar taught by The Reconnection Team. Register: www.TheReconnection.com www.thereconnection.com, 1-323-960-0012.

NOV 10
An evening with Wade Davis; scientist, anthropologist and bestselling author. Wade discusses his latest book Into the Silence: The Great War, Mallory, and the Conquest of Everest. 7:30PM, St. Andrew's Wesley United Church, 1022 Nelson Street. $21/general/ $19/ students & seniors (plus service charges). Tickets at www.vancouvertix.com or call 604-629-8849

Columbia River Gorge, near Goldendale, WA

The past decade has seen a large expansion of wind power in northern Oregon and southern Washington. Major industry players such as Siemens, Vestas, Iberdrola and Cannon Power have installed hundreds of giant wind turbines on farm and ranch land in the area. Much of the electricity is sold to California, and reveneus have been a boost to once-stagnant communities in counties north and south of the Columbia River. Existing hydroelectric dams along the Columbia meant there was already a robust electric transmission system in place to deliver the power to market. -*P.S.B.*

NOV 11-13
Introduction to Foot Reflexology commences Certificate Weekend Training Course. Introduction Friday 7:00-10PM, Sat/Sun 9-6PM. Course $395. Pacific Institute of Reflexology (604) 875-8818, www.pacificreflexology.com

NOV 13
J. Krishnamurti Exploring the Essence of Love and Meditation: Free DVD showing, dialogue, refreshments. Board Breakout Room, 7th floor, Vancouver Public Library, 2PM. aleyona@hotmail.ca 604-354-1534

NOV 19-20
Zoomershow: Consumer Show & Lifestyle Expo for Men & Women 45+. Vancouver Convention Centre, Hall A. 10AM-5PM. Celebritiy performers, speakers & giveaways. Over 150 exhibitors. www.zoomershow.ca

NOV 24
Human need, not corporate greed. "Sharing the World's Resources: Road Map to the Future." Free talk, 7-9 PM, Roundhouse Community Centre (Pacific @ Davie). 604-983-0926.

DEC 1-4
Starhawk: Dec 1: Talk: Imagining a Future We Want; Dec 3-4 Workshop: The Magic of Co-Creation: Building Power in Groups; Book Launch, "Empowerment Manual." Info: www.soundsandfuries.com/workshops

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DEC 5-11
Northwest School of Hellerwork Structural Integration: Hellerwork Structural Integration Foundation Course - Heart-centred training and a structural perspective of the human body integrated with movement-based exploration of mind and emotions. Practitioner Training begins Feb. 2012. Victoria BC. 250-382-9931. www.northwestschoolofhellerwork.com

DEC 24-27
Christmas Celebration Retreat: A silent retreat. Imbibe the stillness of this special time. See Upcoming Events at www.selfrealizationcentrecanada.com 1-604-740-0898.

FEB 3-4, 2012
Judith Lasater, internationally renowned yoga teacher/therapist. Vancouver workshop: SI Joint and Lumbar Spine in Asana. Early registration advised. www.soulspringwellness.ca

SUNDAYS

Centre for Spiritual Living: Join us every Sunday @ 9:15 AM & 11 AM for practical spirituality with great music. Meditation: 10:15 AM. 1880 Triumph Street, Suite 8 (at Victoria Drive), Vancouver. Info: 604-321-1225, www.cslvancouver.com

SOS (Science of Spirituality): See Resource Directory listing in Spiritual Practices for schedule in Richmond, Vancouver & Victoria. 604-277-1247. All Welcome. www.sos.org

TUESDAYS
Reflexology Student Clinic 6–10PM. One- hour sessions $20. By appointment only. Pacific Institute of Reflexology (604) 875-8818. www.pacificreflexology.com

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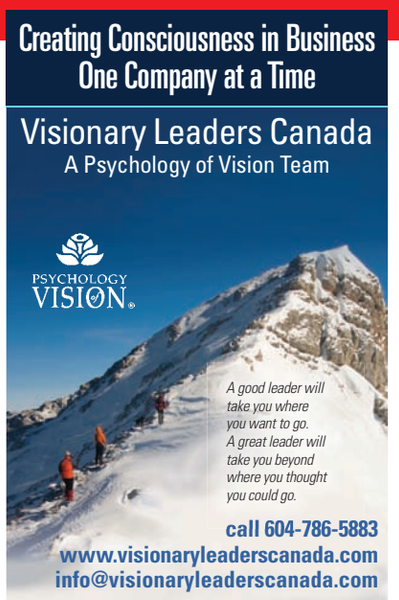
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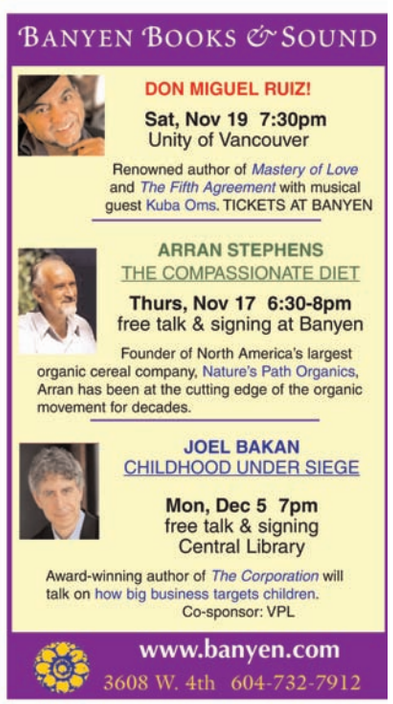
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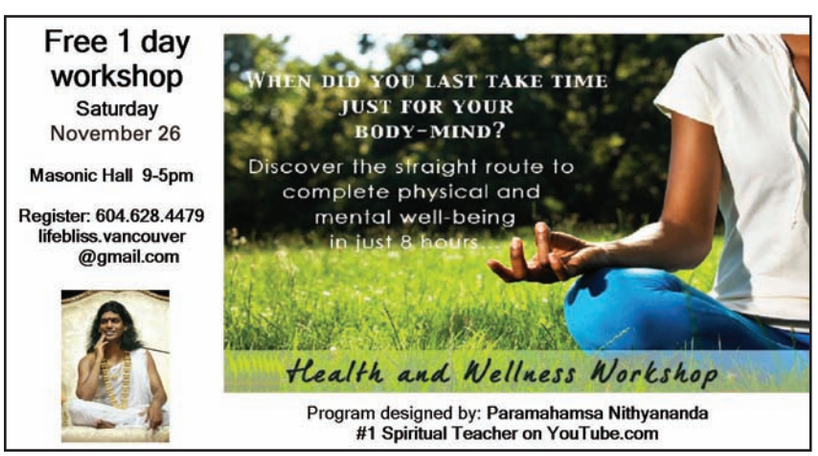

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"Water is a cosmic matter" - Johann Grander

Wall Street conversation

I'm not the only one unhappy with economic systems based on constant growth and endlessly increasing exploitation of finite resources – systems that concentrate wealth in the hands of a few while so many people struggle.

Beginning on September 17, protests spread from New York to a growing number of cities across the United States, Europe and Canada, in a movement dubbed "Occupy Wall Street." It's interesting that those credited with spurring the movement did so with a single question: "What is our one demand?" The question was first posed in my hometown of Vancouver by *Adbusters* magazine. Editor Kalle Lasn said the campaign was launched as an invitation to act more than an attempt to get an answer. Focusing on a single demand may or may not be a useful exercise, but the conversation itself is necessary.

Why have governments spent trillions of dollars in taxpayers' money to bail out financial institutions, many of which fought any notion of government regulation or social assistance while doing nothing for people who had life savings wiped out or lost homes through foreclosure? And why have governments not at least demanded that the institutions demonstrate some ecological and social responsibility in return?

Why do developed nations still give tax breaks to the wealthiest few while children go hungry and working people and the unemployed see wages, benefits and opportunities dwindle? Why are we rapidly exploiting finite resources and destroying precious natural systems for the sake of short-term profit and unsustainable economic growth?

The course of human history is constantly changing. It's up to all of us to join the conversation.

Why does our economic system place a higher value on disposable and often unnecessary goods and services than on the things we really need to survive and be healthy, like clean air, clean water and productive soil? Sure, there's some contradiction in protesters carrying iPhones while railing against the consumer system. But this is not just about making personal changes and sacrifices; it's about questioning our place on this planet.

In less than a century, the human population has grown exponentially, from 1.5 to seven billion. That's been matched by rapid growth in technology and products, resource exploitation and knowledge. The pace and manner of development have led to a reliance on fossil fuels, to the extent that much of our infrastructure supports products such as cars and their fuels.

It may seem like there's no hope for change, but we have to remember that most of these developments are recent and that humans are capable of innovation, creativity and foresight. I don't know if the Occupy Wall Street protests will lead to anything. Surely, there will be backlash. And although I wouldn't compare these protests to those in the Middle East, they all show that, when people have had enough of inequality, of the negative and destructive consequences of decisions made by people in power, we have a responsibility to come together and speak out.

The course of human history is constantly changing. It's up to all of us to join the conversation to help steer it to a better path than the one we are on. Maybe our one demand should be of ourselves: Care enough to do something.

Written with contributions from David Suzuki Foundation editorial and communications specialist **Ian Hanington**. Learn more at www.davidsuzuki.org

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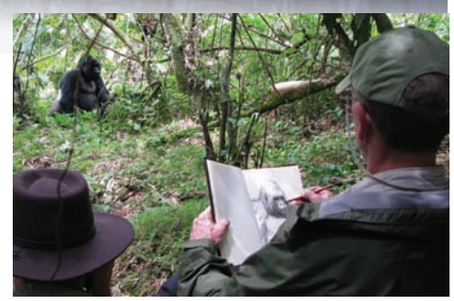

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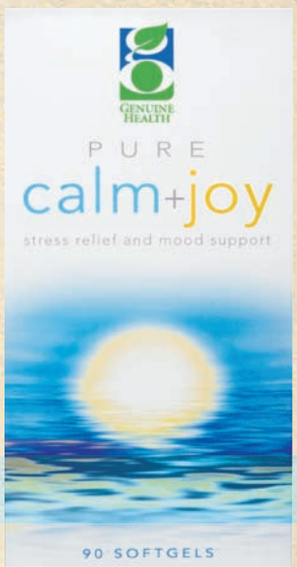

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* The Efficacy of Omega-3 Supplementation for Major Depression: A Randomized Controlled Trial. François Lespérance, MD; Nancy Frasure-Smith, PhD; Elis St-André, MD; Gustavo Turecki, MD, PhD; Paul Lespérance, MD, MSc; and Stephen R. Wisniewski PhD